THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BEST-SELLING SERIES CONTINUES!

Garth Ennis Russ Braun John McCrea Darick Robertson

The BOYS™

volume nine: THE BIG RIDE

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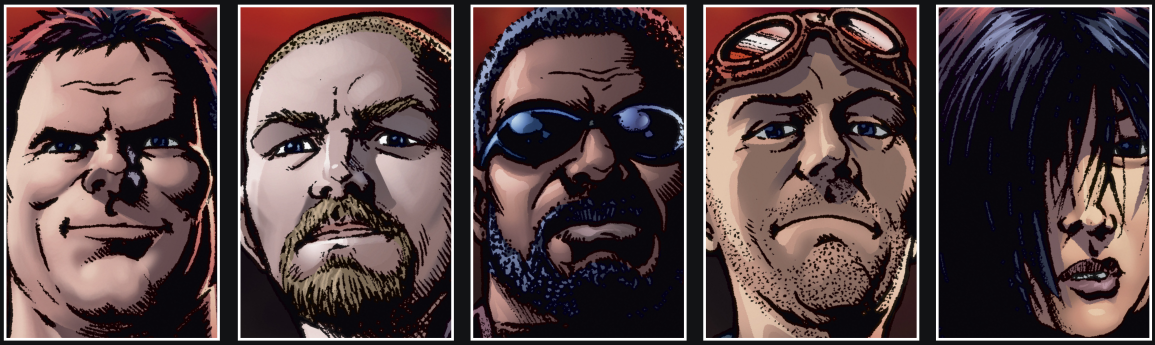
PROPER PREPARATION AND PLANNING...

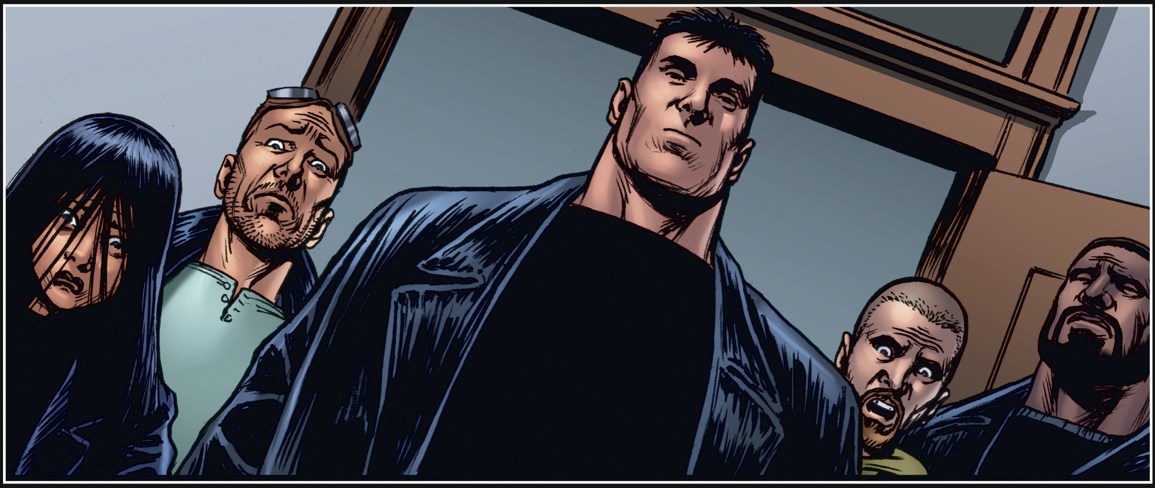
In a world where costumed heroes soar through the sky and masked vigilantes prowl the night, someone's got to make sure the “supes” don't get out of line. And someone will.



Billy Butcher, Wee Hughie, Mother's Milk, The Frenchman and The Female are The Boys: a CIA-backed team of very dangerous people, each one dedicated to the struggle against the most lethal force on Earth- superpower. Some superheroes have to be watched. Some have to be controlled. And some of them- sometimes- need to be taken out of the picture.

That's when you call in **The Boys.**

All the pieces are falling into place, for the Boys as well as their most mortal enemies. The long-dreaded superhuman conflict is on its way. But first there are secrets still to be uncovered: like the story of the team's first encounter with supergroup The Seven, and the shockwaves from that disastrous meeting that still reverberate today. Hughie, meanwhile, discovers his comrades' hidden history, as their original leader Colonel Greg Mallory takes him through sixty years of the filthiest black operations imaginable. And finally, with good and bad guys teetering on the brink, a shadowy force sets events in motion that will push even Butcher over the edge...



This volume collects issues 48-59 of the *New York Times* Best-Selling series by Garth Ennis, Darick Robertson, Russ Braun and John McCrea, and features all of the covers by Robertson!!

RATED
M
SUGGESTED FOR
MATURE READERS

SUPERHERO

Dynamite Entertainment Presents

The BOYS™

volume nine: THE BIG RIDE

The BOYS™

volume nine: THE BIG RIDE

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GARTH ENNIS &
DARICK ROBERTSON

Collects issues forty-eight through fifty-nine of The Boys, originally published by Dynamite Entertainment.

Trade Design by: **JASON ULLMEYER**

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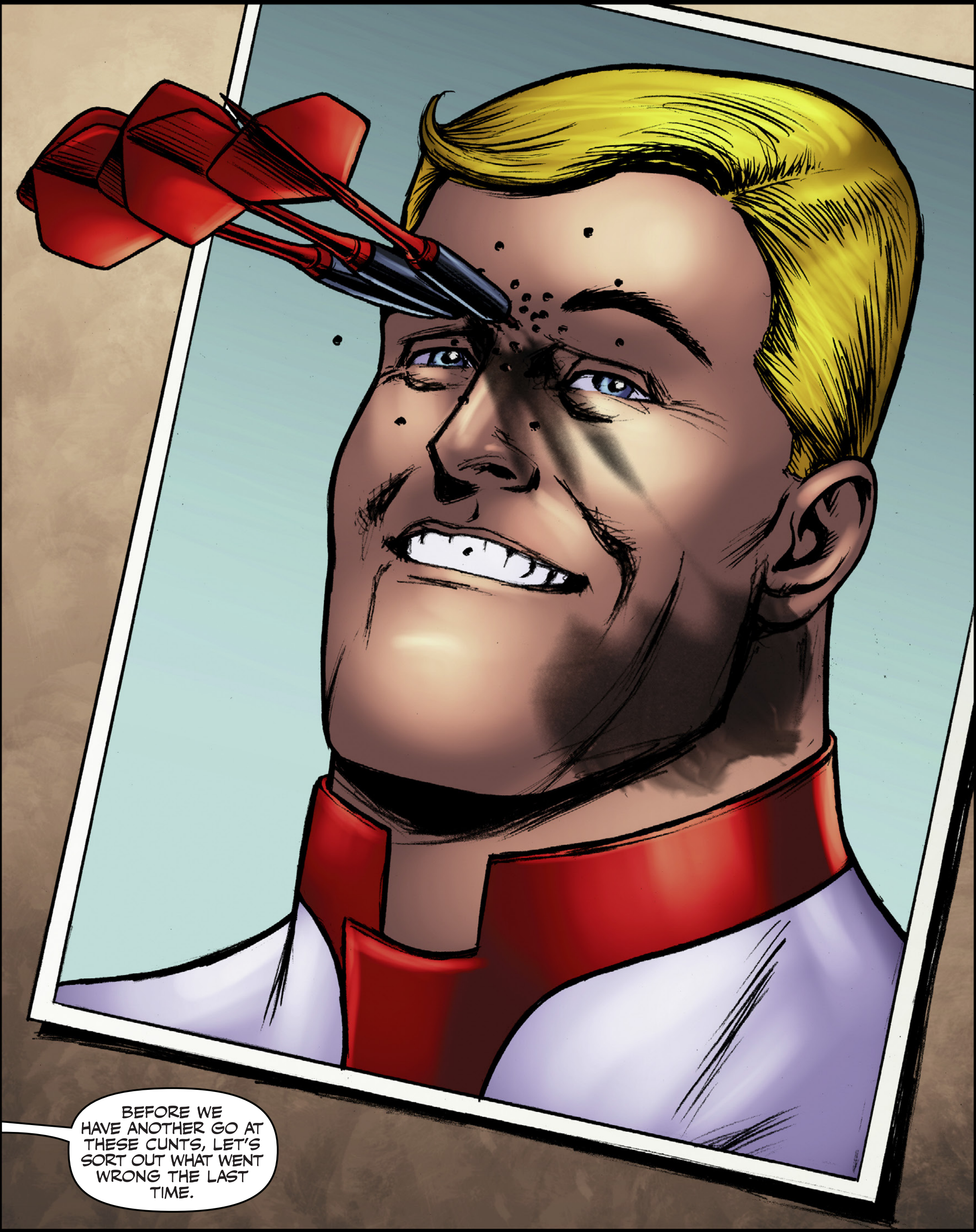
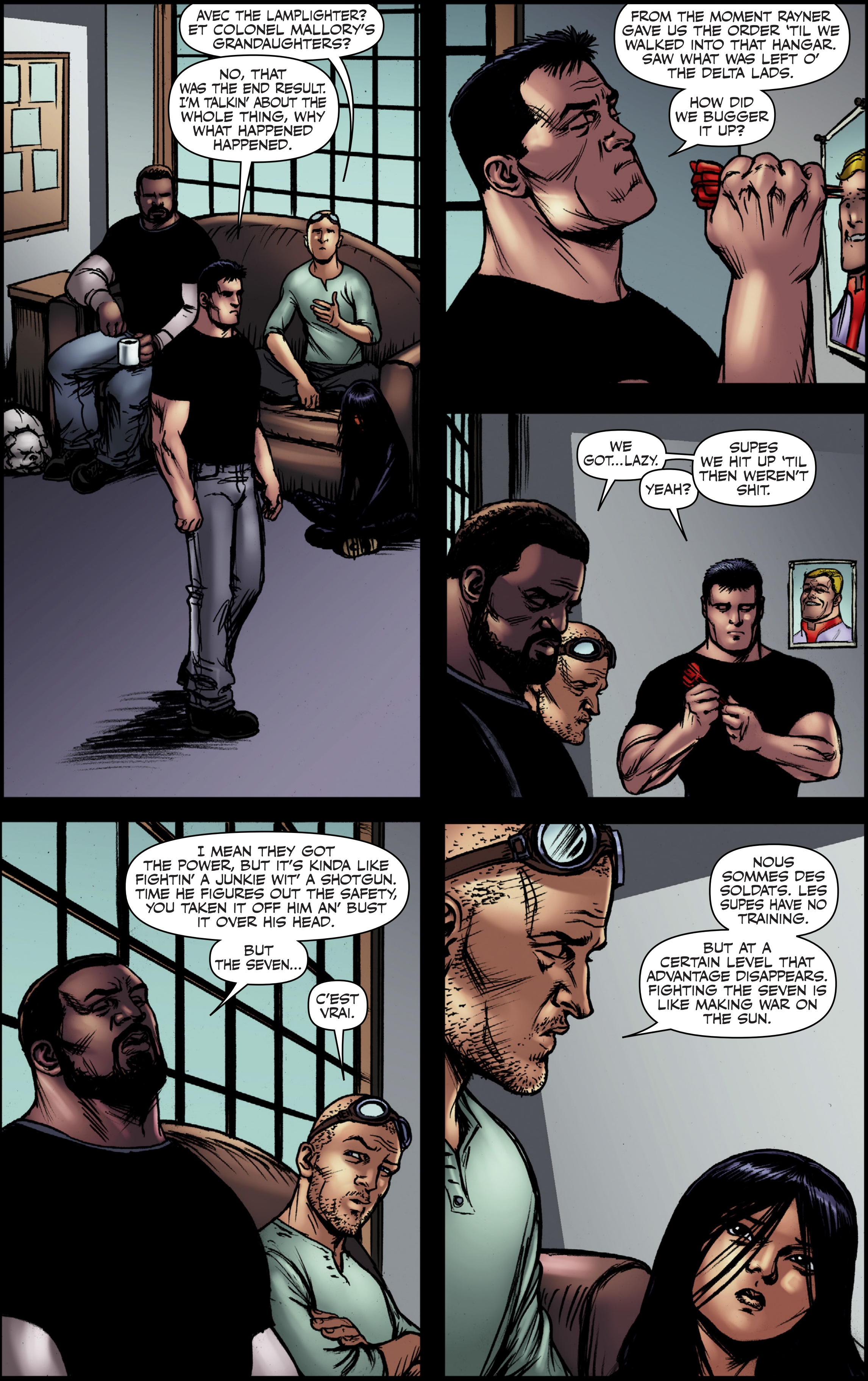
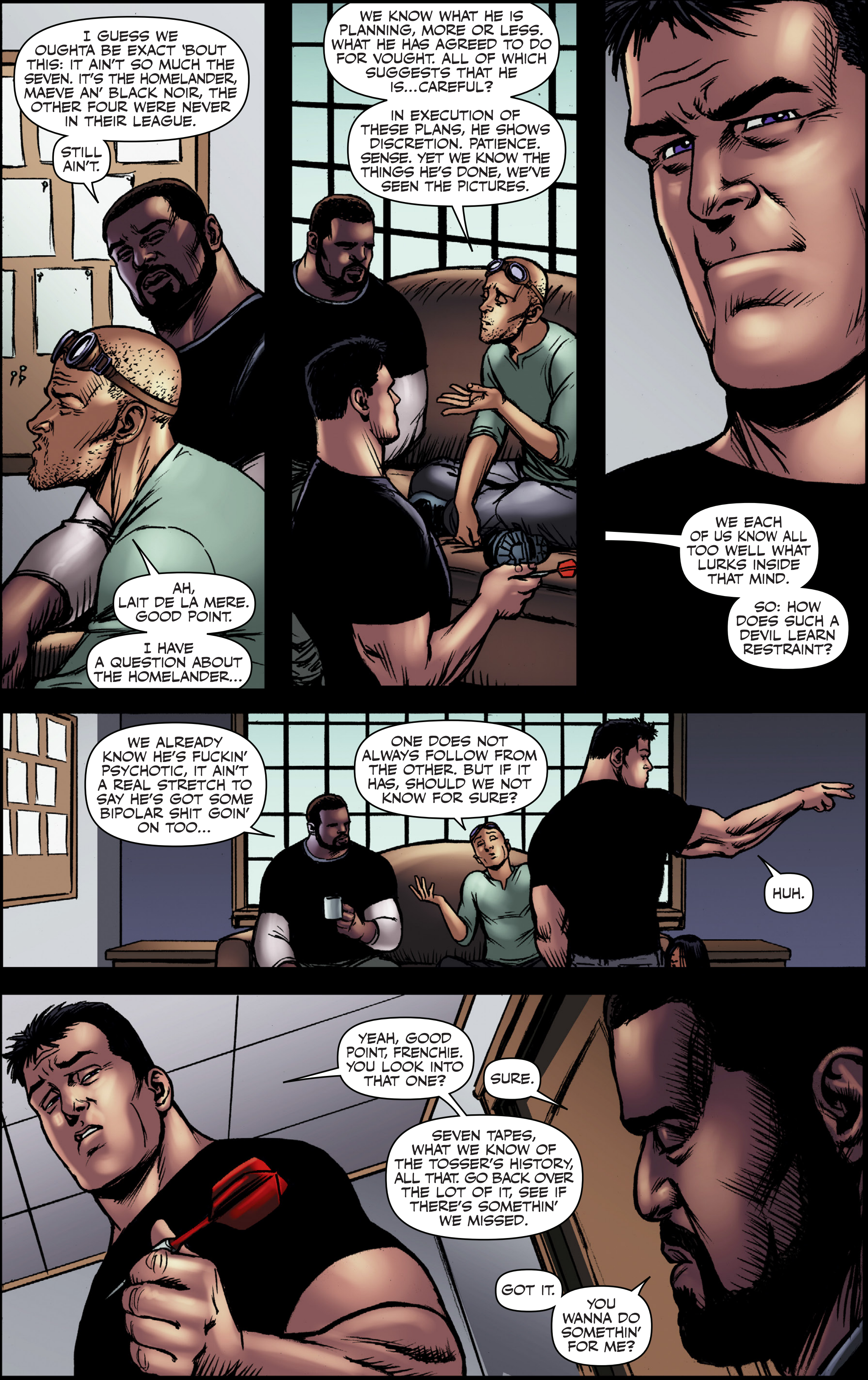
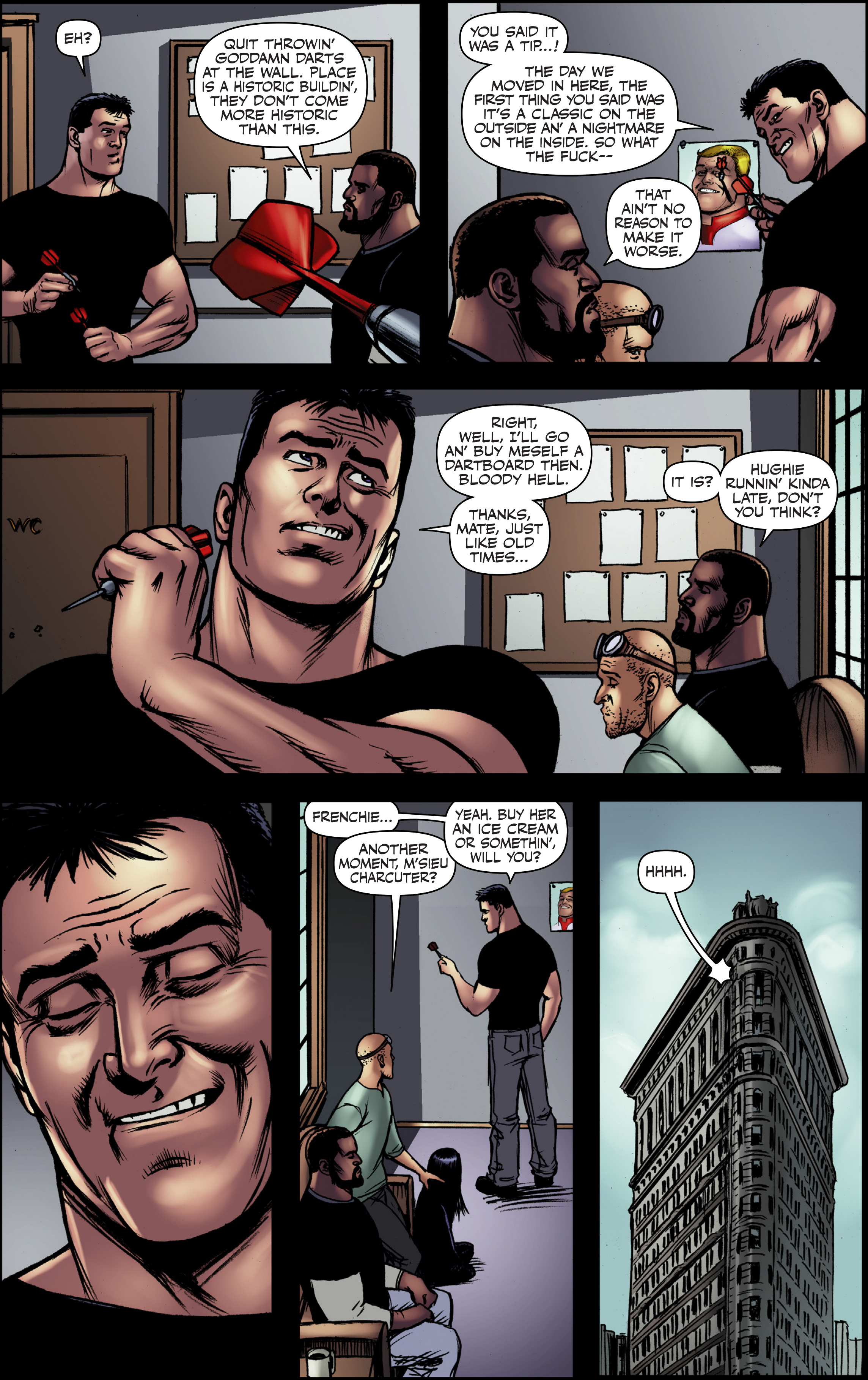

BEFORE WE HAVE ANOTHER GO AT THESE CUNTS, LET'S SORT OUT WHAT WENT WRONG THE LAST TIME.

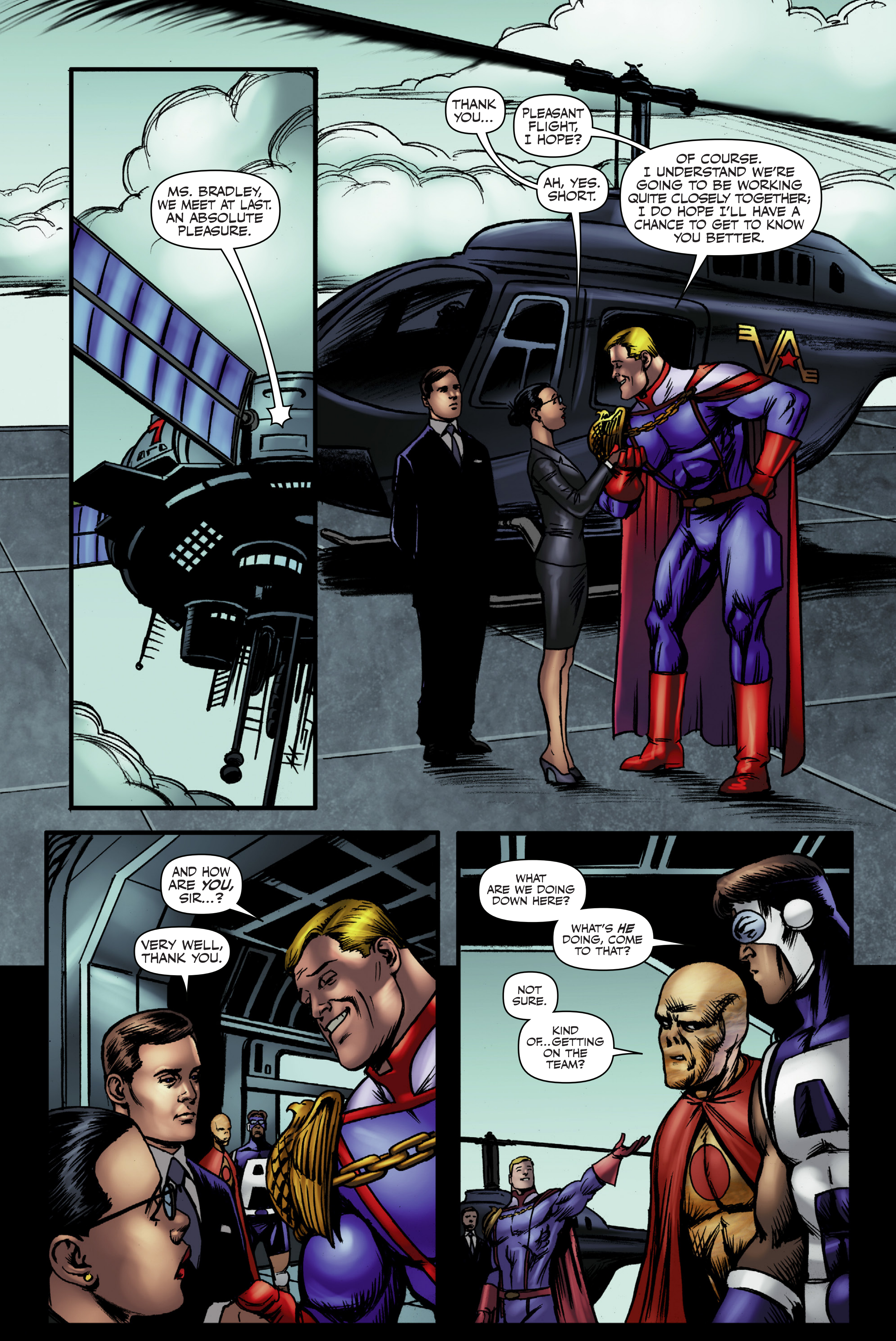
PROPER PREPARATION AND PLANNING

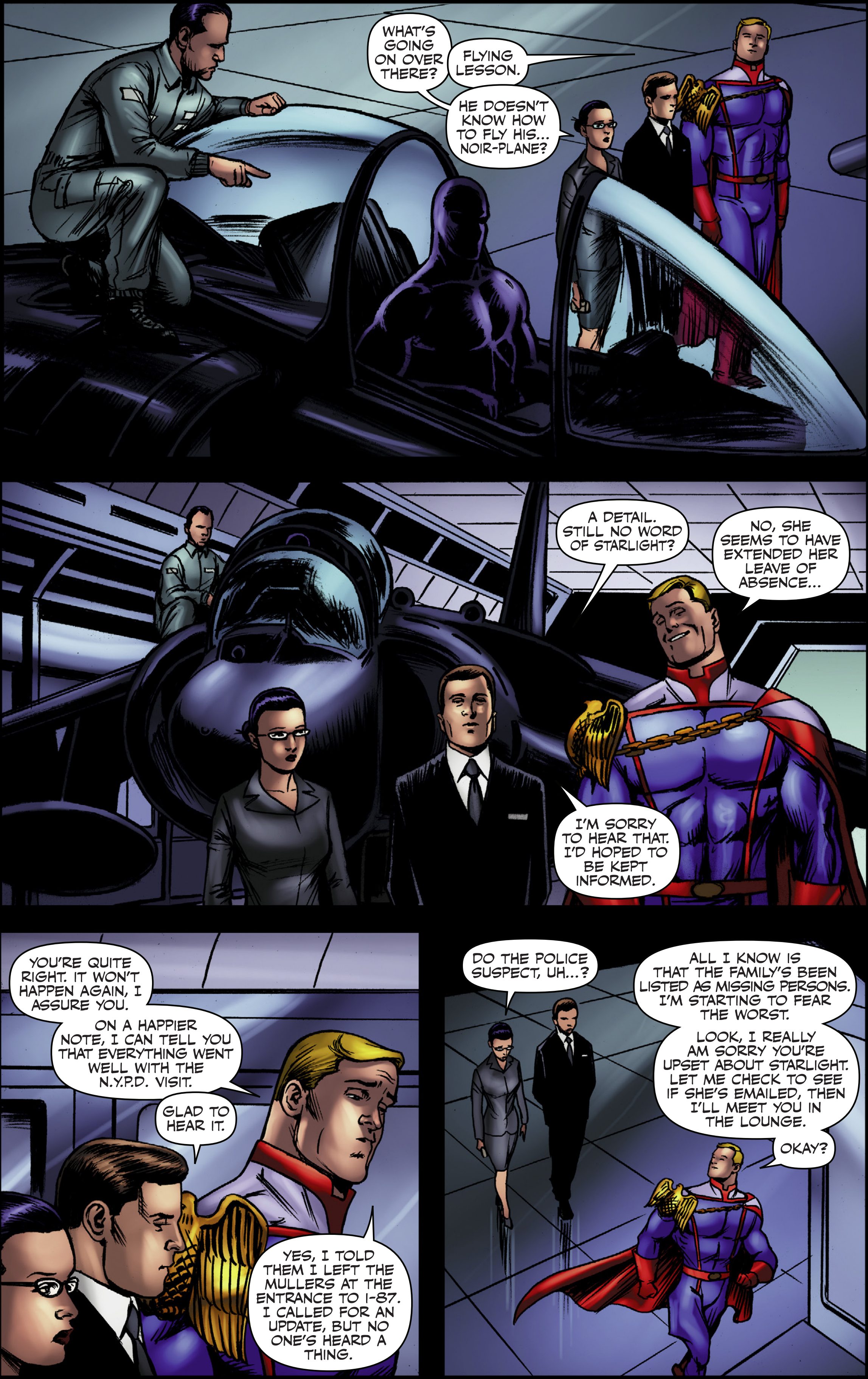
part one

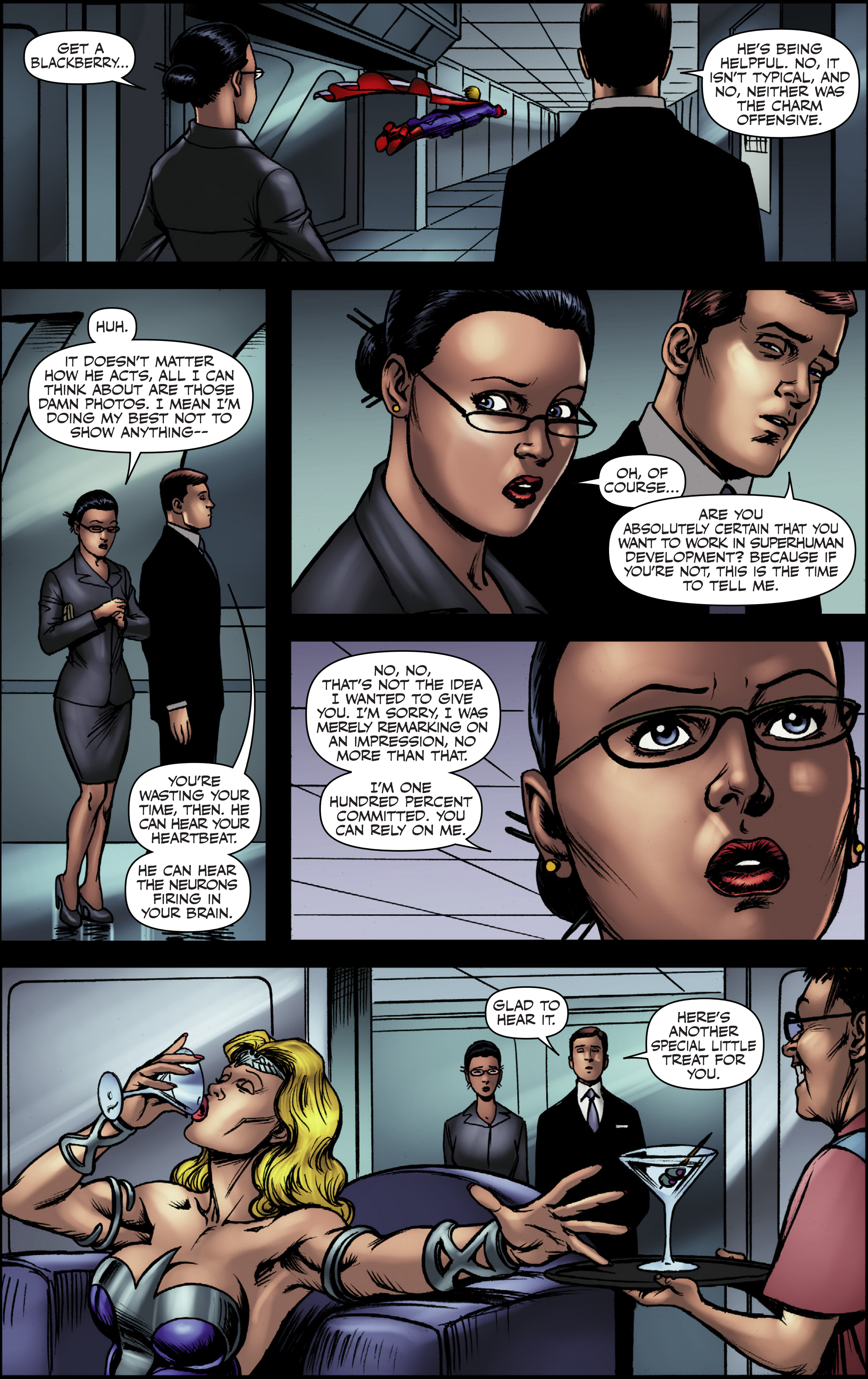

AVEC THE LAMPLIGHTER? ET COLONEL MALLORY'S GRANDAUGHTERS?
NO, THAT WAS THE END RESULT. I'M TALKIN' ABOUT THE WHOLE THING, WHY WHAT HAPPENED HAPPENED.
FROM THE MOMENT RAYNER GAVE US THE ORDER 'TIL WE WALKED INTO THAT HANGAR. SAW WHAT WAS LEFT O' THE DELTA LADS.
HOW DID WE BUGGER IT UP?
WE GOT...LAZY.
YEAH?
SUPES WE HIT UP 'TIL THEN WEREN'T SHIT.
I MEAN THEY GOT THE POWER, BUT IT'S KINDA LIKE FIGHTIN' A JUNKIE WIT' A SHOTGUN. TIME HE FIGURES OUT THE SAFETY, YOU TAKEN IT OFF HIM AN' BUST IT OVER HIS HEAD.
BUT THE SEVEN...
C'EST VRAI.
NOUS SOMMES DES SOLDATS. LES SUPES HAVE NO TRAINING.
BUT AT A CERTAIN LEVEL THAT ADVANTAGE DISAPPEARS. FIGHTING THE SEVEN IS LIKE MAKING WAR ON THE SUN.

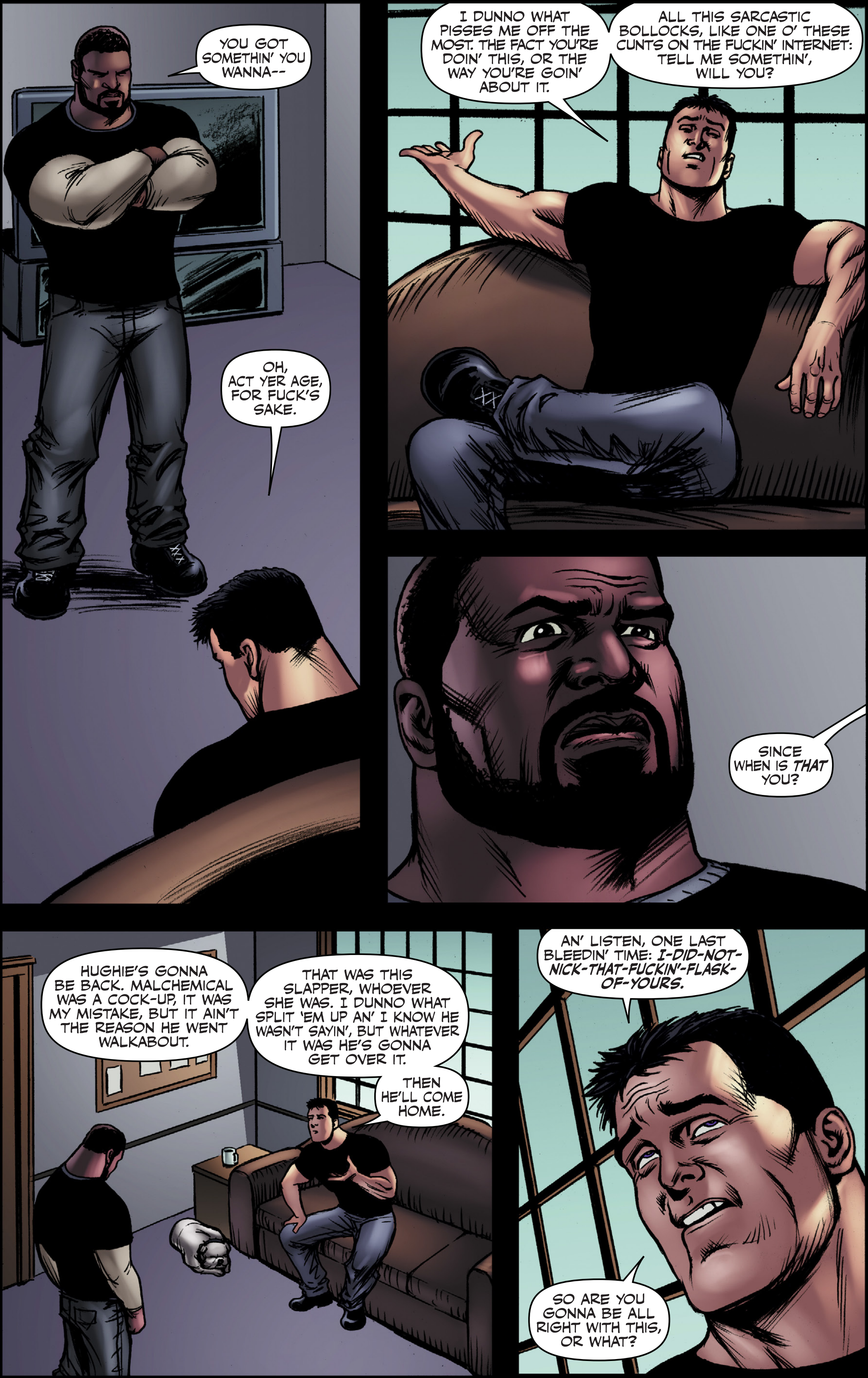

I GUESS WE OUGHTA BE EXACT 'BOUT THIS: IT AIN'T SO MUCH THE SEVEN. IT'S THE HOMELANDER, MAEVE AN' BLACK NOIR, THE OTHER FOUR WERE NEVER IN THEIR LEAGUE.
STILL AIN'T.
AH, LAIT DE LA MERE. GOOD POINT.
I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT THE HOMELANDER...
WE KNOW WHAT HE IS PLANNING, MORE OR LESS. WHAT HE HAS AGREED TO DO FOR VOUGHT. ALL OF WHICH SUGGESTS THAT HE IS...CAREFUL?
IN EXECUTION OF THESE PLANS, HE SHOWS DISCRETION. PATIENCE. SENSE. YET WE KNOW THE THINGS HE'S DONE, WE'VE SEEN THE PICTURES.
WE EACH OF US KNOW ALL TOO WELL WHAT LURKS INSIDE THAT MIND.
SO: HOW DOES SUCH A DEVIL LEARN RESTRAINT?
WE ALREADY KNOW HE'S FUCKIN' PSYCHOTIC, IT AIN'T A REAL STRETCH TO SAY HE'S GOT SOME BIPOLAR SHIT GOIN' ON TOO...
ONE DOES NOT ALWAYS FOLLOW FROM THE OTHER. BUT IF IT HAS, SHOULD WE NOT KNOW FOR SURE?
HUH.
YEAH, GOOD POINT, FRENCHIE. YOU LOOK INTO THAT ONE?
SURE.
SEVEN TAPES, WHAT WE KNOW OF THE TOSSER'S HISTORY, ALL THAT. GO BACK OVER THE LOT OF IT, SEE IF THERE'S SOMETHIN' WE MISSED.
GOT IT.
YOU WANNA DO SOMETHIN' FOR ME?

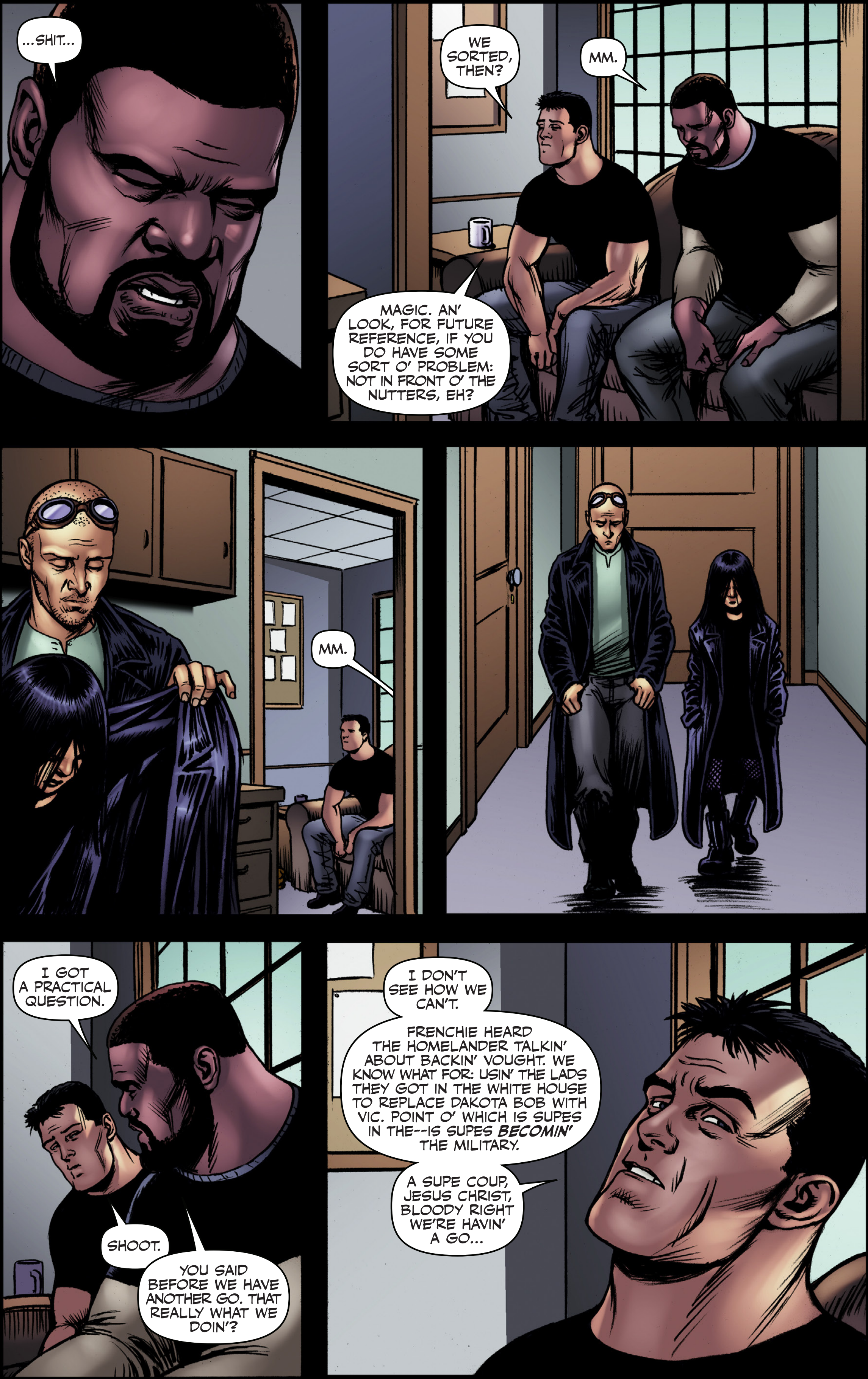

EH?
QUIT THROWIN' GODDAMN DARTS AT THE WALL. PLACE IS A HISTORIC BUILDIN', THEY DON'T COME MORE HISTORIC THAN THIS.
YOU SAID IT WAS A TIP...!
THE DAY WE MOVED IN HERE, THE FIRST THING YOU SAID WAS IT'S A CLASSIC ON THE OUTSIDE AN' A NIGHTMARE ON THE INSIDE. SO WHAT THE FUCK--
THAT AIN'T NO REASON TO MAKE IT WORSE.
WC
RIGHT, WELL, I'LL GO AN' BUY MESELF A DARTBOARD THEN. BLOODY HELL.
THANKS, MATE, JUST LIKE OLD TIMES...
IT IS?
HUGHIE RUNNIN' KINDA LATE, DON'T YOU THINK?
FRENCHIE...
ANOTHER MOMENT, M'SIEU CHARCUTER?
YEAH. BUY HER AN ICE CREAM OR SOMETHIN', WILL YOU?
HHHH.

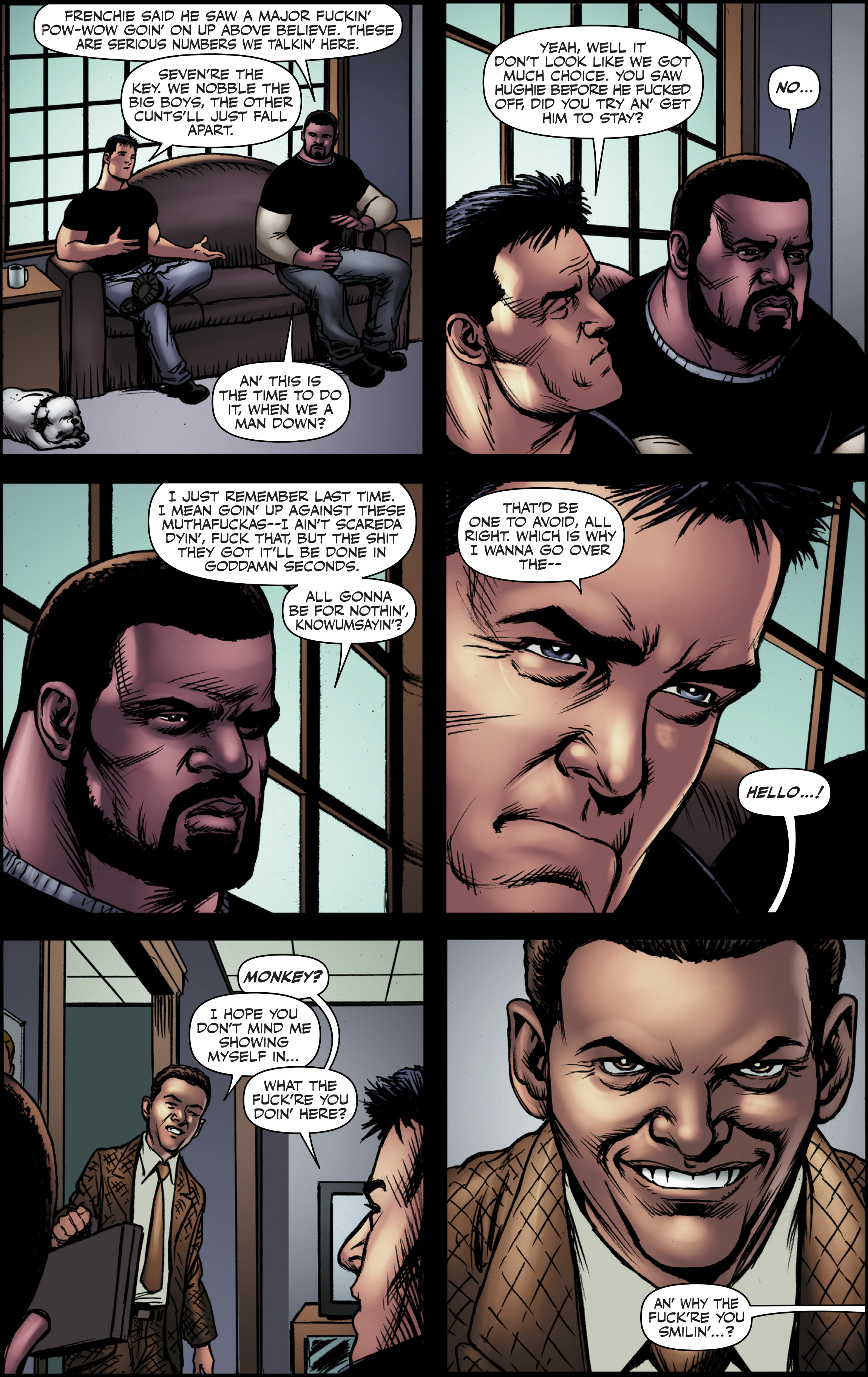

MS. BRADLEY, WE MEET AT LAST. AN ABSOLUTE PLEASURE.
THANK YOU...
PLEASANT FLIGHT, I HOPE?
AH, YES. SHORT.
OF COURSE. I UNDERSTAND WE'RE GOING TO BE WORKING QUITE CLOSELY TOGETHER; I DO HOPE I'LL HAVE A CHANCE TO GET TO KNOW YOU BETTER.
AND HOW ARE *YOU,* SIR...?
VERY WELL, THANK YOU.
WHAT ARE WE DOING DOWN HERE?
WHAT'S *HE* DOING, COME TO THAT?
NOT SURE.
KIND OF...GETTING ON THE TEAM?

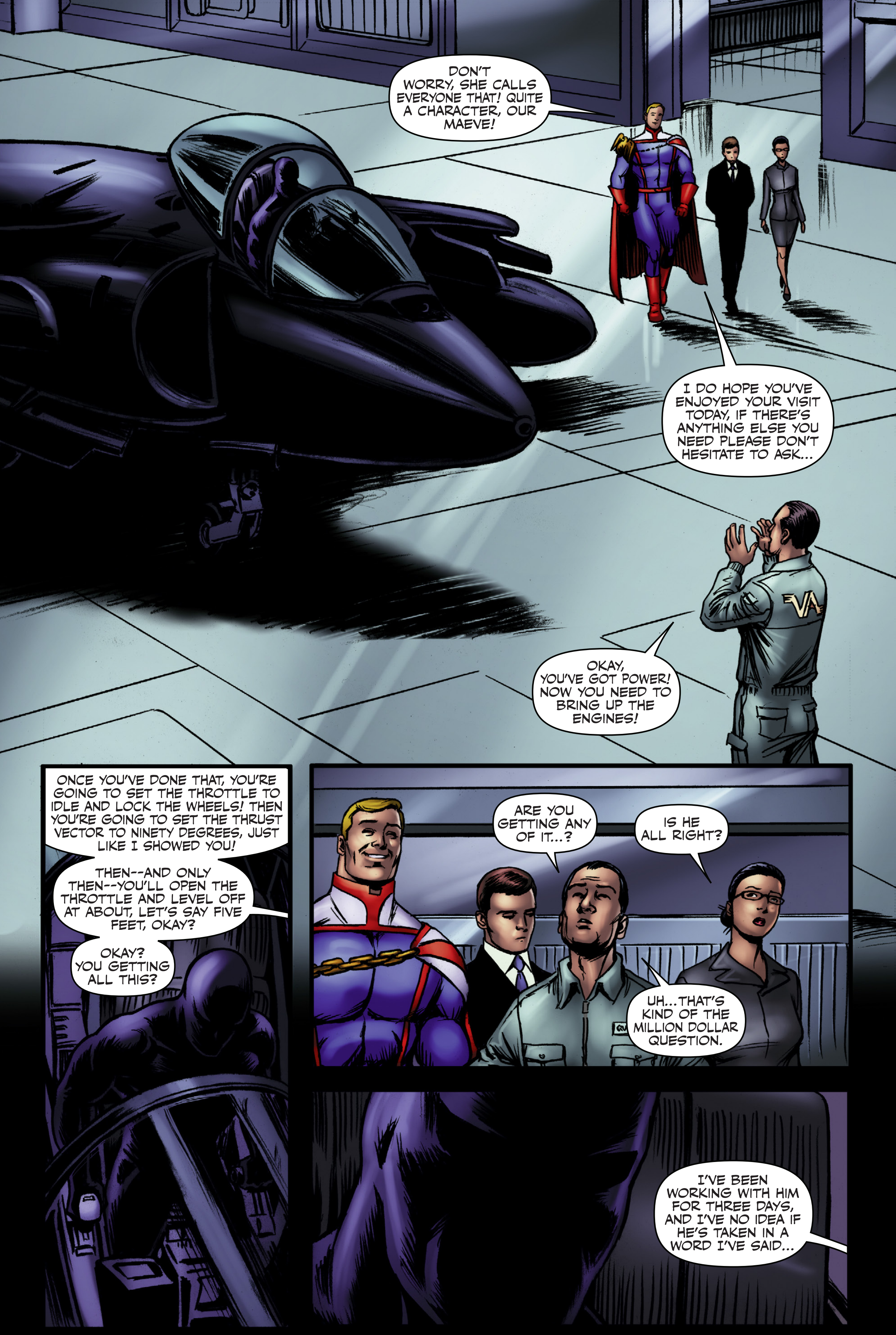

WHAT'S GOING ON OVER THERE?
FLYING LESSON.
HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO FLY HIS... NOIR-PLANE?
A DETAIL. STILL NO WORD OF STARLIGHT?
NO, SHE SEEMS TO HAVE EXTENDED HER LEAVE OF ABSENCE...
I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT. I'D HOPED TO BE KEPT INFORMED.
YOU'RE QUITE RIGHT. IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN, I ASSURE YOU.
ON A HAPPIER NOTE, I CAN TELL YOU THAT EVERYTHING WENT WELL WITH THE N.Y.P.D. VISIT.
GLAD TO HEAR IT.
YES, I TOLD THEM I LEFT THE MULLERS AT THE ENTRANCE TO I-87. I CALLED FOR AN UPDATE, BUT NO ONE'S HEARD A THING.
DO THE POLICE SUSPECT, UH...?
ALL I KNOW IS THAT THE FAMILY'S BEEN LISTED AS MISSING PERSONS. I'M STARTING TO FEAR THE WORST.
LOOK, I REALLY AM SORRY YOU'RE UPSET ABOUT STARLIGHT. LET ME CHECK TO SEE IF SHE'S EMAILED, THEN I'LL MEET YOU IN THE LOUNGE.
OKAY?

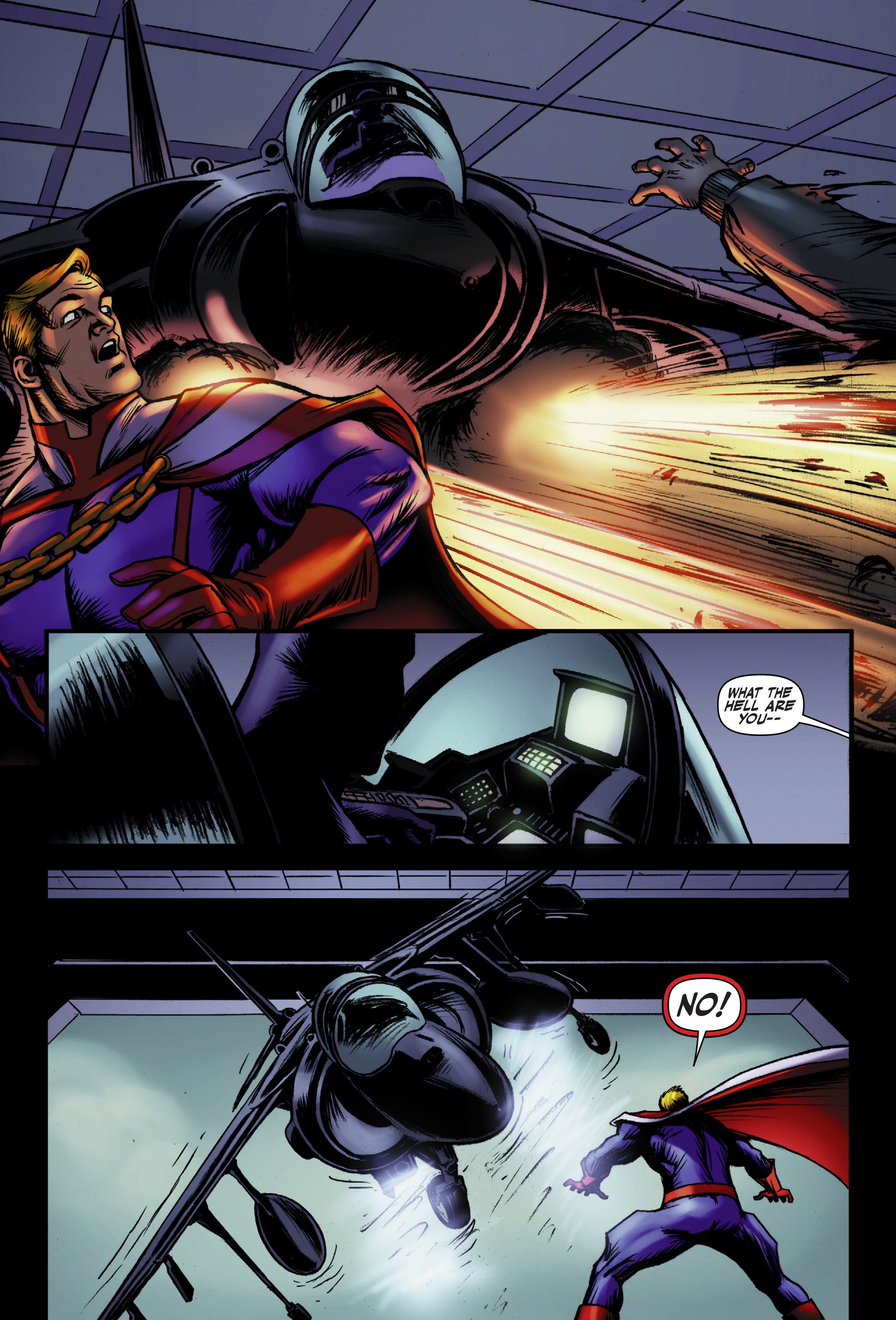

GET A BLACKBERRY...
HE'S BEING HELPFUL. NO, IT ISN'T TYPICAL, AND NO, NEITHER WAS THE CHARM OFFENSIVE.
HUH.
IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW HE ACTS, ALL I CAN THINK ABOUT ARE THOSE DAMN PHOTOS. I MEAN I'M DOING MY BEST NOT TO SHOW ANYTHING--
YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME, THEN. HE CAN HEAR YOUR HEARTBEAT.
HE CAN HEAR THE NEURONS FIRING IN YOUR BRAIN.
OH, OF COURSE...
ARE YOU ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN THAT YOU WANT TO WORK IN SUPERHUMAN DEVELOPMENT? BECAUSE IF YOU'RE NOT, THIS IS THE TIME TO TELL ME.
NO, NO, THAT'S NOT THE IDEA I WANTED TO GIVE YOU. I'M SORRY, I WAS MERELY REMARKING ON AN IMPRESSION, NO MORE THAN THAT.
I'M ONE HUNDRED PERCENT COMMITTED. YOU CAN RELY ON ME.
GLAD TO HEAR IT.
HERE'S ANOTHER SPECIAL LITTLE TREAT FOR YOU.

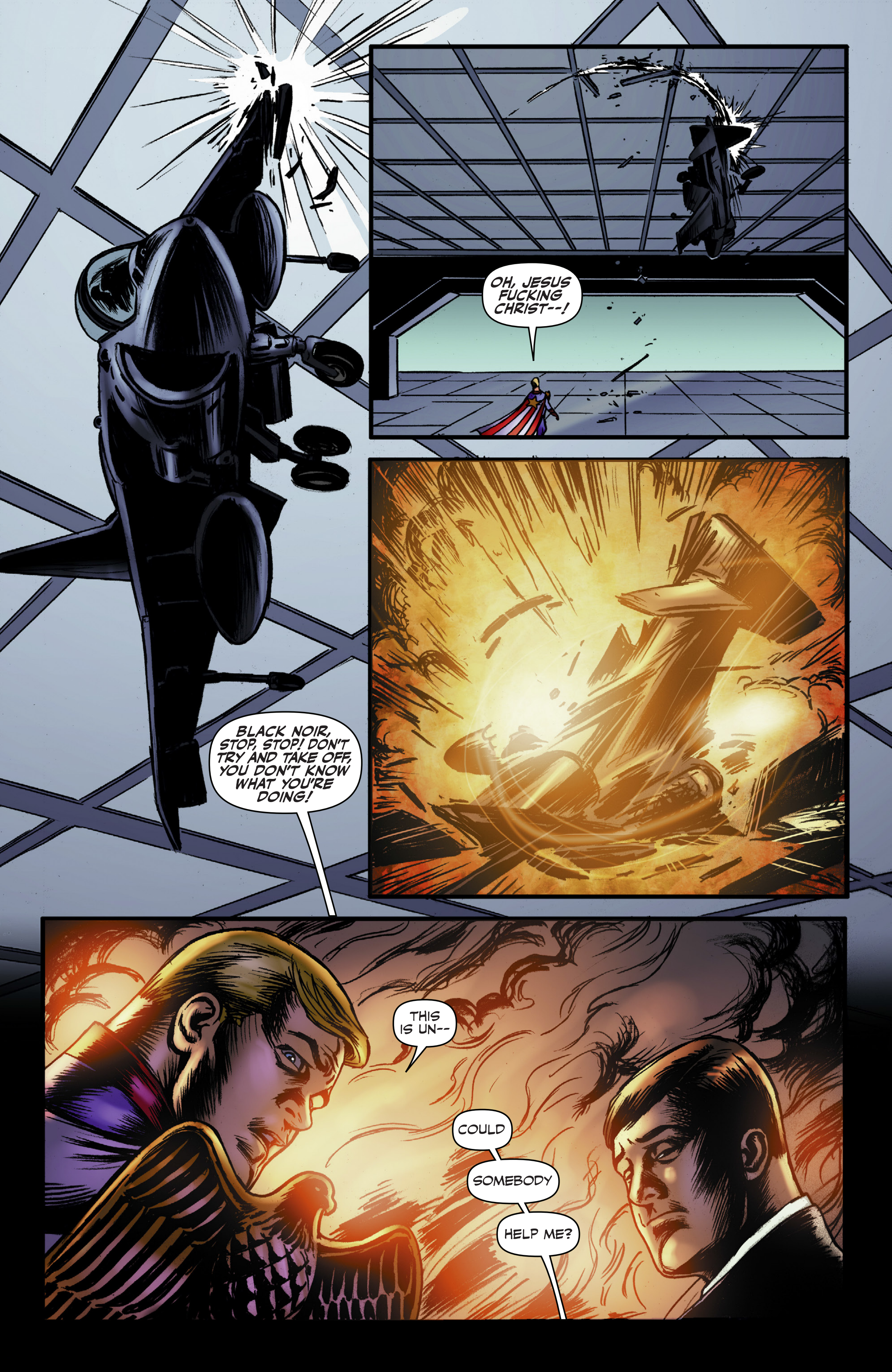

YOU GOT SOMETHIN' YOU WANNA--
OH, ACT YER AGE, FOR FUCK'S SAKE.
I DUNNO WHAT PISSES ME OFF THE MOST. THE FACT YOU'RE DOIN' THIS, OR THE WAY YOU'RE GOIN' ABOUT IT.
ALL THIS SARCASTIC BOLLOCKS, LIKE ONE O' THESE CUNTS ON THE FUCKIN' INTERNET: TELL ME SOMETHIN', WILL YOU?
SINCE WHEN IS *THAT* YOU?
HUGHIE'S GONNA BE BACK. MALCHEMICAL WAS A COCK-UP, IT WAS MY MISTAKE, BUT IT AIN'T THE REASON HE WENT WALKABOUT.
THAT WAS THIS SLAPPER, WHOEVER SHE WAS. I DUNNO WHAT SPLIT 'EM UP AN' I KNOW HE WASN'T SAYIN', BUT WHATEVER IT WAS HE'S GONNA GET OVER IT.
THEN HE'LL COME HOME.
AN' LISTEN, ONE LAST BLEEDIN' TIME: *I-DID-NOT-NICK-THAT-FUCKIN'-FLASK-OF-YOURS.*
SO ARE YOU GONNA BE ALL RIGHT WITH THIS, OR WHAT?

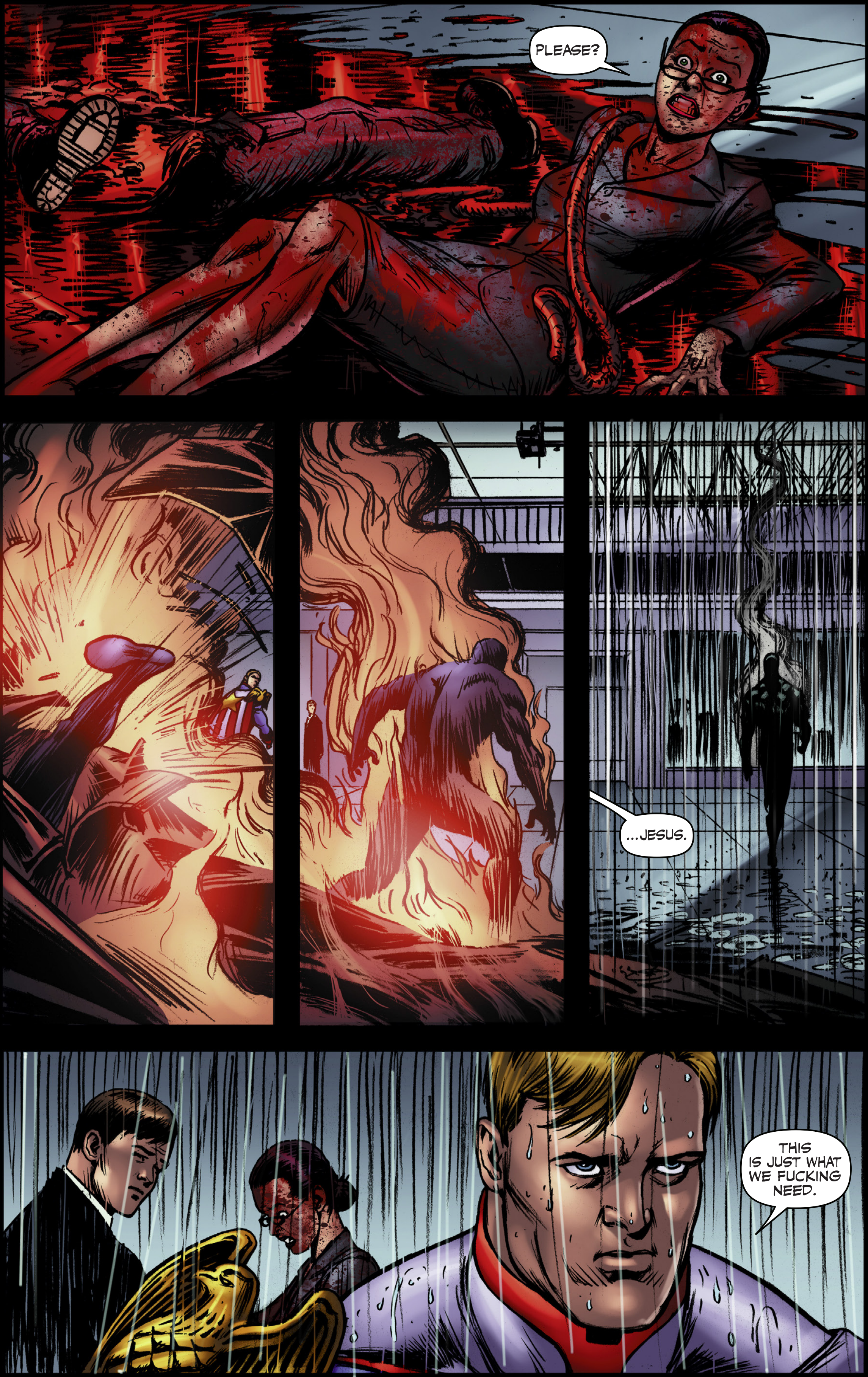

...SHIT...
WE SORTED, THEN?
MM.
MAGIC. AN' LOOK, FOR FUTURE REFERENCE, IF YOU DO HAVE SOME SORT O' PROBLEM: NOT IN FRONT O' THE NUTTERS, EH?
MM.
I GOT A PRACTICAL QUESTION.
SHOOT.
YOU SAID BEFORE WE HAVE ANOTHER GO. THAT REALLY WHAT WE DOIN'?
I DON'T SEE HOW WE CAN'T.
FRENCHIE HEARD THE HOMELANDER TALKIN' ABOUT BACKIN' VOUGHT. WE KNOW WHAT FOR: USIN' THE LADS THEY GOT IN THE WHITE HOUSE TO REPLACE DAKOTA BOB WITH VIC. POINT O' WHICH IS SUPES IN THE--IS SUPES *BECOMIN'* THE MILITARY.
A SUPE COUP, JESUS CHRIST, BLOODY RIGHT WE'RE HAVIN' A GO...

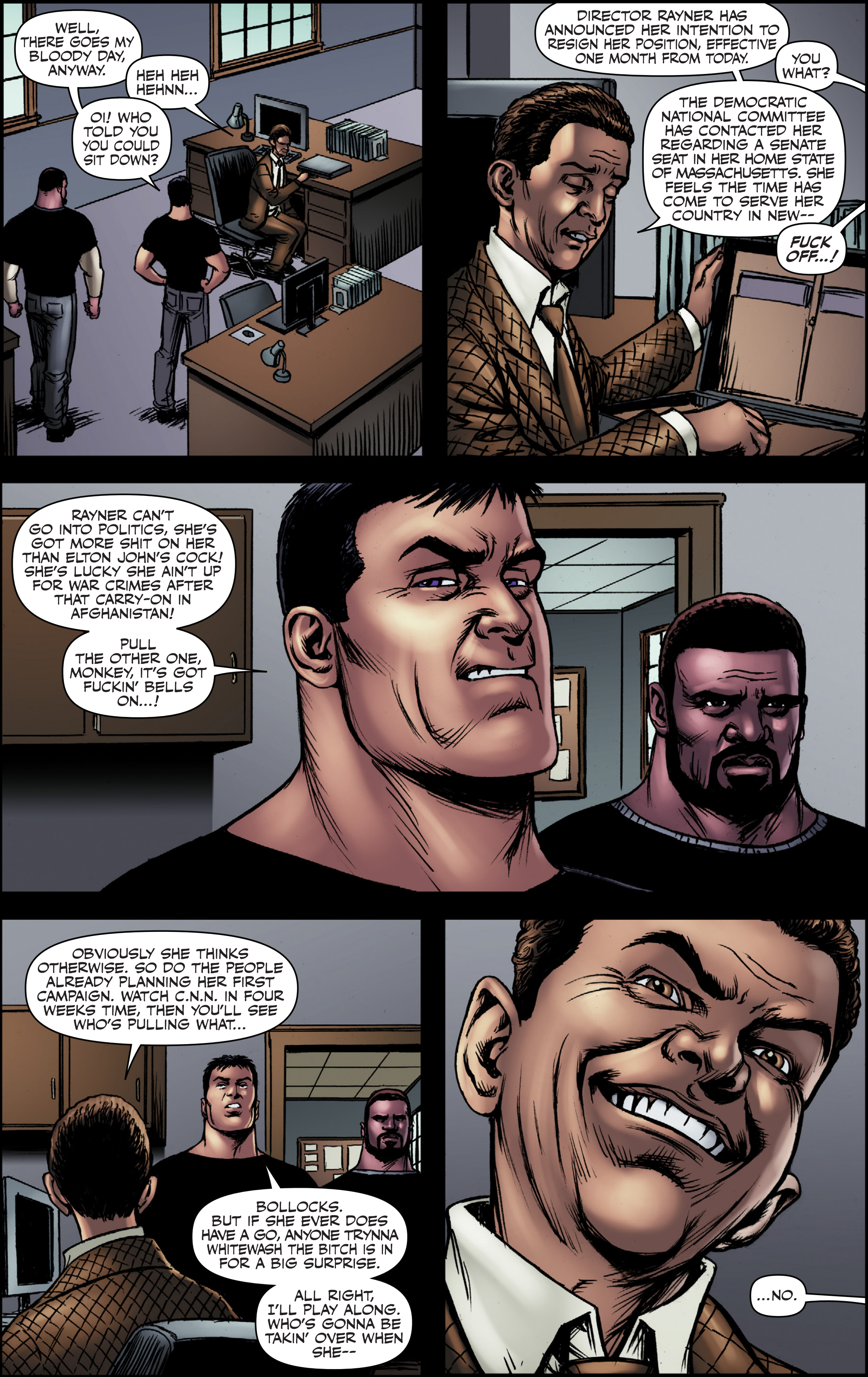

FRENCHIE SAID HE SAW A MAJOR FUCKIN' POW-WOW GOIN' ON UP ABOVE BELIEVE. THESE ARE SERIOUS NUMBERS WE TALKIN' HERE.
SEVEN'RE THE KEY. WE NOBBLE THE BIG BOYS, THE OTHER CUNTS'LL JUST FALL APART.
AN' THIS IS THE TIME TO DO IT, WHEN WE A MAN DOWN?
YEAH, WELL IT DON'T LOOK LIKE WE GOT MUCH CHOICE. YOU SAW HUGHIE BEFORE HE FUCKED OFF, DID YOU TRY AN' GET HIM TO STAY?
NO...!
I JUST REMEMBER LAST TIME. I MEAN GOIN' UP AGAINST THESE MUTHAFUCKAS--I AIN'T SCAREDA DYIN', FUCK THAT, BUT THE SHIT THEY GOT IT'LL BE DONE IN GODDAMN SECONDS.
ALL GONNA BE FOR NOTHIN', KNOWUMSAYIN'?
THAT'D BE ONE TO AVOID, ALL RIGHT. WHICH IS WHY I WANNA GO OVER THE--
HELLO...!
MONKEY?
I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND ME SHOWING MYSELF IN...
WHAT THE FUCK'RE YOU DOIN' HERE?
AN' WHY THE FUCK'RE YOU SMILIN'...?

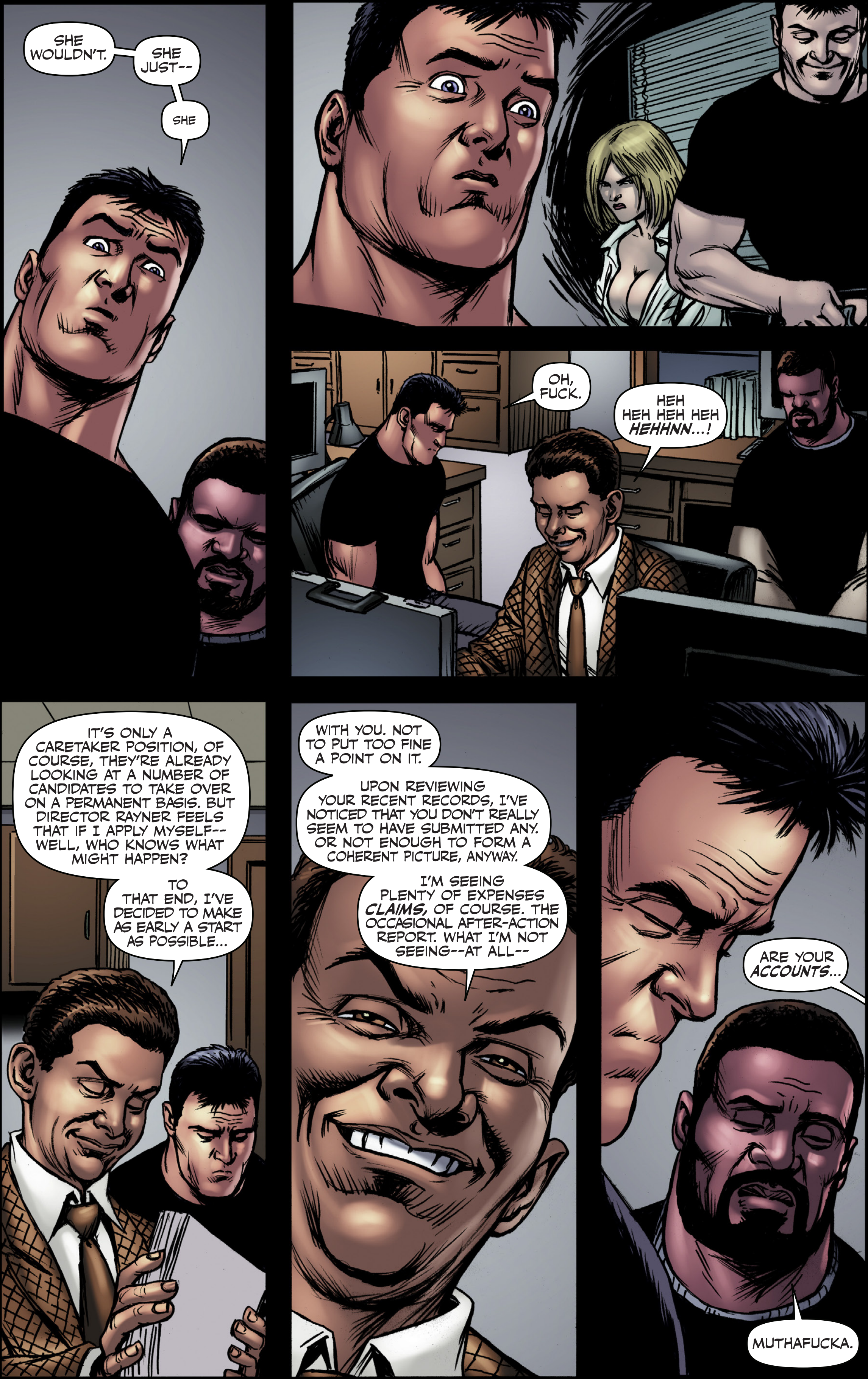

DON'T WORRY, SHE CALLS EVERYONE THAT! QUITE A CHARACTER, OUR MAEVE!
I DO HOPE YOU'VE ENJOYED YOUR VISIT TODAY, IF THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE YOU NEED PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO ASK...
VA
OKAY, YOU'VE GOT POWER! NOW YOU NEED TO BRING UP THE ENGINES!
ONCE YOU'VE DONE THAT, YOU'RE GOING TO SET THE THROTTLE TO IDLE AND LOCK THE WHEELS! THEN YOU'RE GOING TO SET THE THRUST VECTOR TO NINETY DEGREES, JUST LIKE I SHOWED YOU!
THEN--AND ONLY THEN--YOU'LL OPEN THE THROTTLE AND LEVEL OFF AT ABOUT, LET'S SAY FIVE FEET, OKAY?
OKAY? YOU GETTING ALL THIS?
ARE YOU GETTING ANY OF IT...?
IS HE ALL RIGHT?
UH...THAT'S KIND OF THE MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION.
I'VE BEEN WORKING WITH HIM FOR THREE DAYS, AND I'VE NO IDEA IF HE'S TAKEN IN A WORD I'VE SAID...

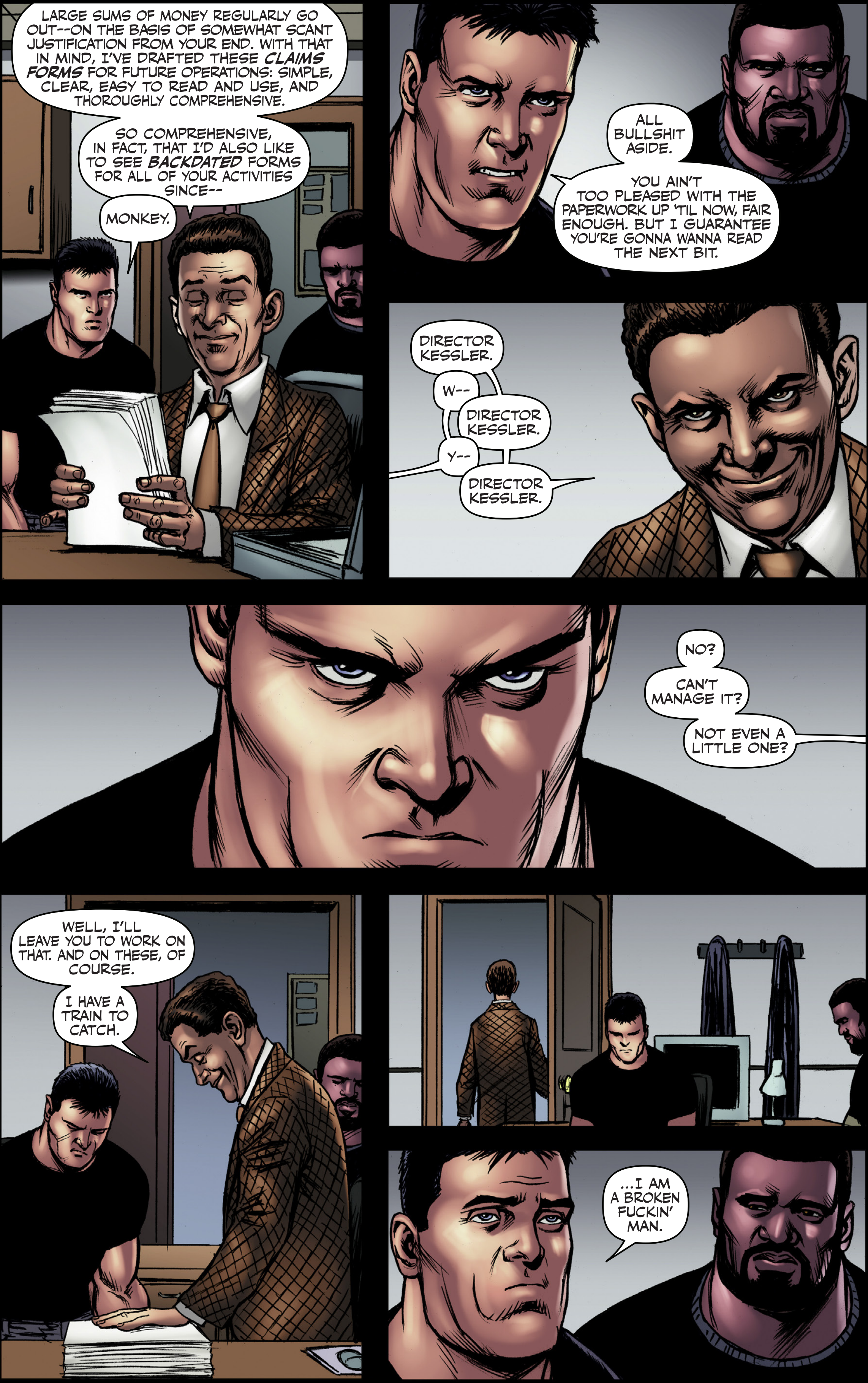

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU--
NO!

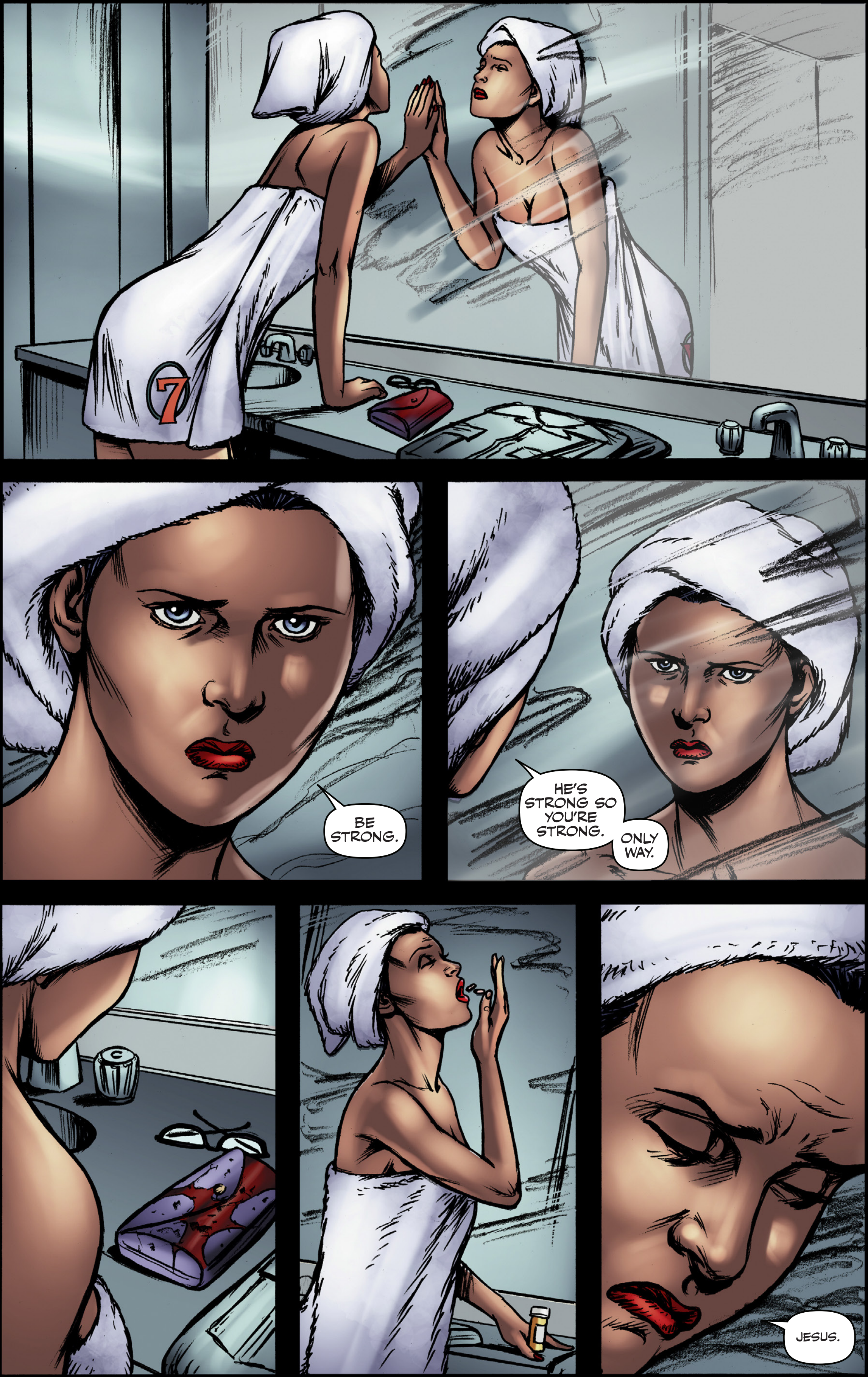

OH, JESUS FUCKING CHRIST--!
BLACK NOIR, STOP, STOP! DON'T TRY AND TAKE OFF, YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING!
THIS IS UN--
COULD
SOMEBODY
HELP ME?

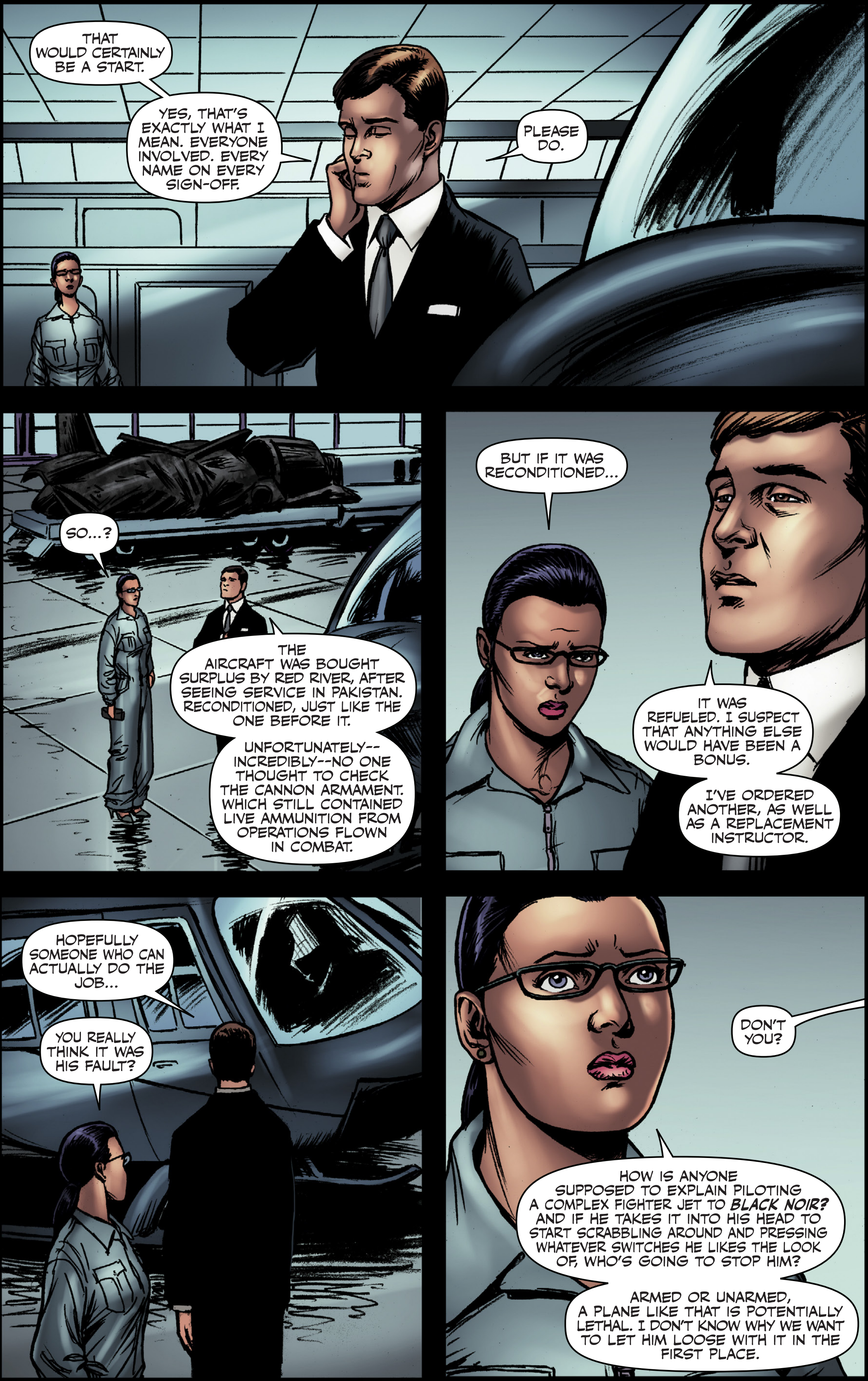

PLEASE?
...JESUS.
THIS IS JUST WHAT WE FUCKING NEED.

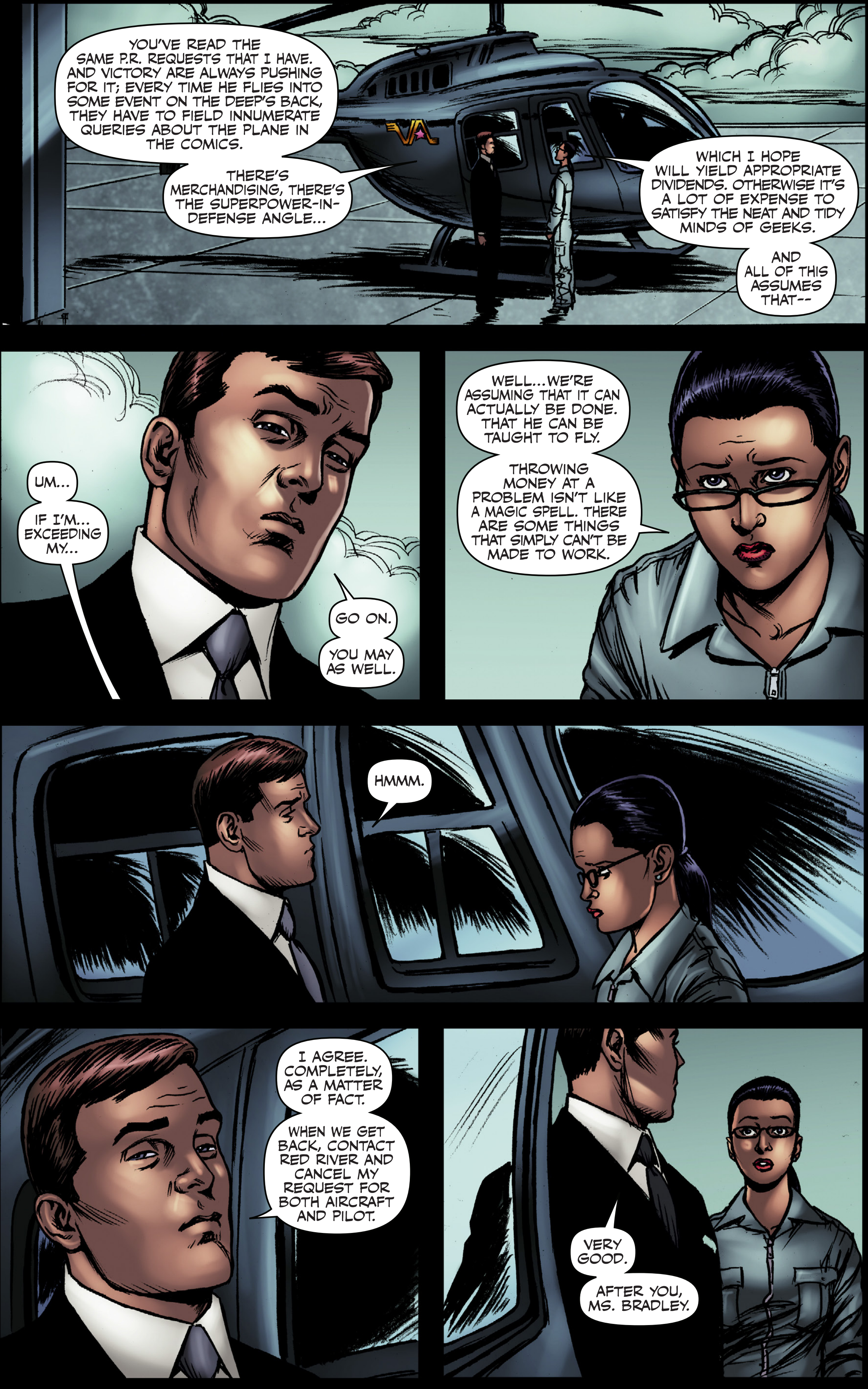

WELL, THERE GOES MY BLOODY DAY, ANYWAY.
HEH HEH HEHNN...
OI! WHO TOLD YOU YOU COULD SIT DOWN?
DIRECTOR RAYNER HAS ANNOUNCED HER INTENTION TO RESIGN HER POSITION, EFFECTIVE ONE MONTH FROM TODAY.
YOU WHAT?
THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE HAS CONTACTED HER REGARDING A SENATE SEAT IN HER HOME STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS. SHE FEELS THE TIME HAS COME TO SERVE HER COUNTRY IN NEW--
FUCK OFF...!
RAYNER CAN'T GO INTO POLITICS, SHE'S GOT MORE SHIT ON HER THAN ELTON JOHN'S COCK! SHE'S LUCKY SHE AIN'T UP FOR WAR CRIMES AFTER THAT CARRY-ON IN AFGHANISTAN!
PULL THE OTHER ONE, MONKEY, IT'S GOT FUCKIN' BELLS ON...!
OBVIOUSLY SHE THINKS OTHERWISE. SO DO THE PEOPLE ALREADY PLANNING HER FIRST CAMPAIGN. WATCH C.N.N. IN FOUR WEEKS TIME, THEN YOU'LL SEE WHO'S PULLING WHAT...
BOLLOCKS. BUT IF SHE EVER DOES HAVE A GO, ANYONE TRYNNA WHITEWASH THE BITCH IS IN FOR A BIG SURPRISE.
ALL RIGHT, I'LL PLAY ALONG. WHO'S GONNA BE TAKIN' OVER WHEN SHE--
...NO.

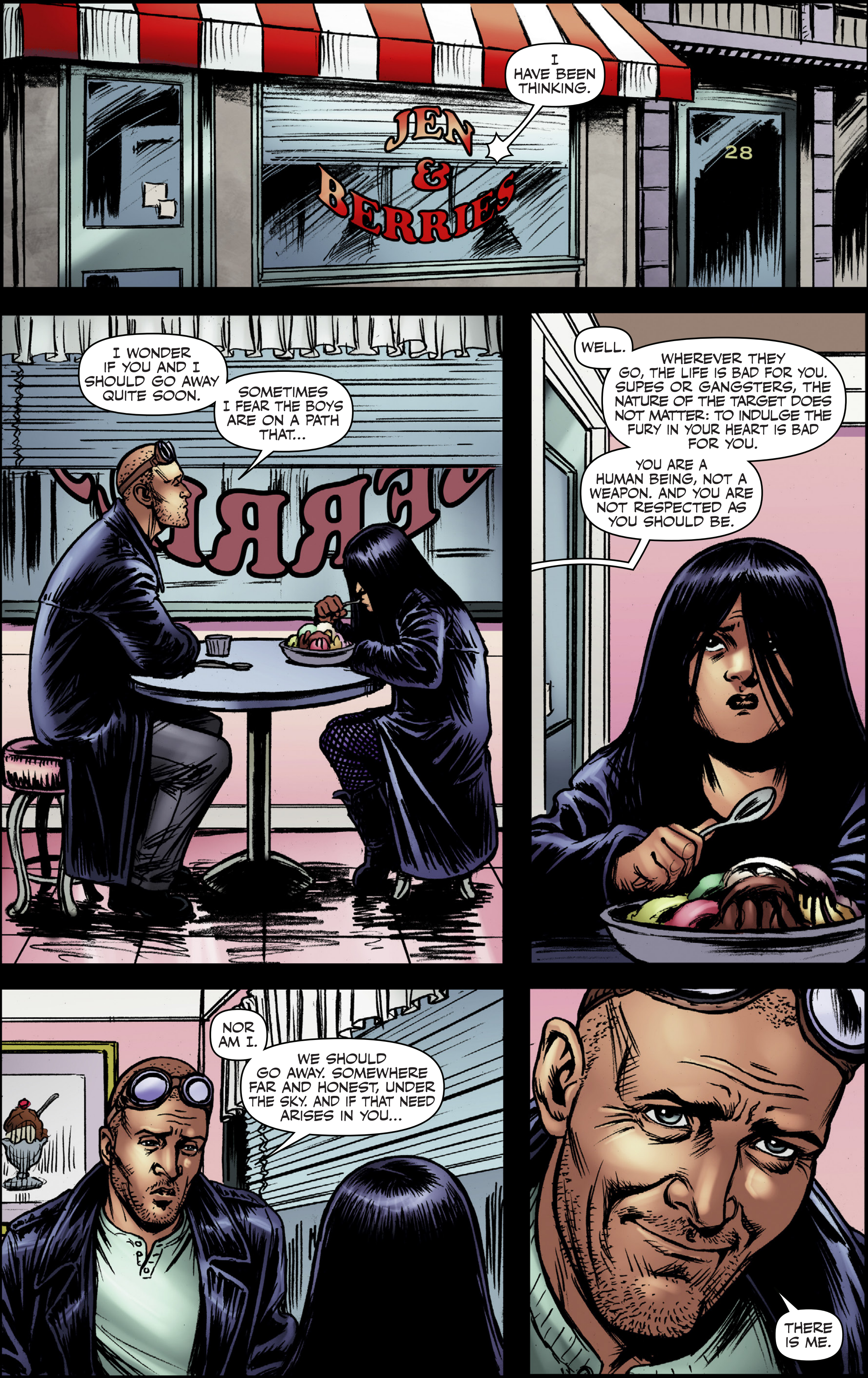

SHE WOULDN'T.
SHE JUST--
SHE
OH, FUCK.
HEH HEH HEH HEH *HEHHNN*...!
IT'S ONLY A CARETAKER POSITION, OF COURSE, THEY'RE ALREADY LOOKING AT A NUMBER OF CANDIDATES TO TAKE OVER ON A PERMANENT BASIS. BUT DIRECTOR RAYNER FEELS THAT IF I APPLY MYSELF-- WELL, WHO KNOWS WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN?
TO THAT END, I'VE DECIDED TO MAKE AS EARLY A START AS POSSIBLE...
WITH YOU. NOT TO PUT TOO FINE A POINT ON IT.
UPON REVIEWING YOUR RECENT RECORDS, I'VE NOTICED THAT YOU DON'T REALLY SEEM TO HAVE SUBMITTED ANY. OR NOT ENOUGH TO FORM A COHERENT PICTURE, ANYWAY.
I'M SEEING PLENTY OF EXPENSES *CLAIMS,* OF COURSE. THE OCCASIONAL AFTER-ACTION REPORT. WHAT I'M NOT SEEING--AT ALL--
ARE YOUR *ACCOUNTS*...
MUTHAFUCKA.

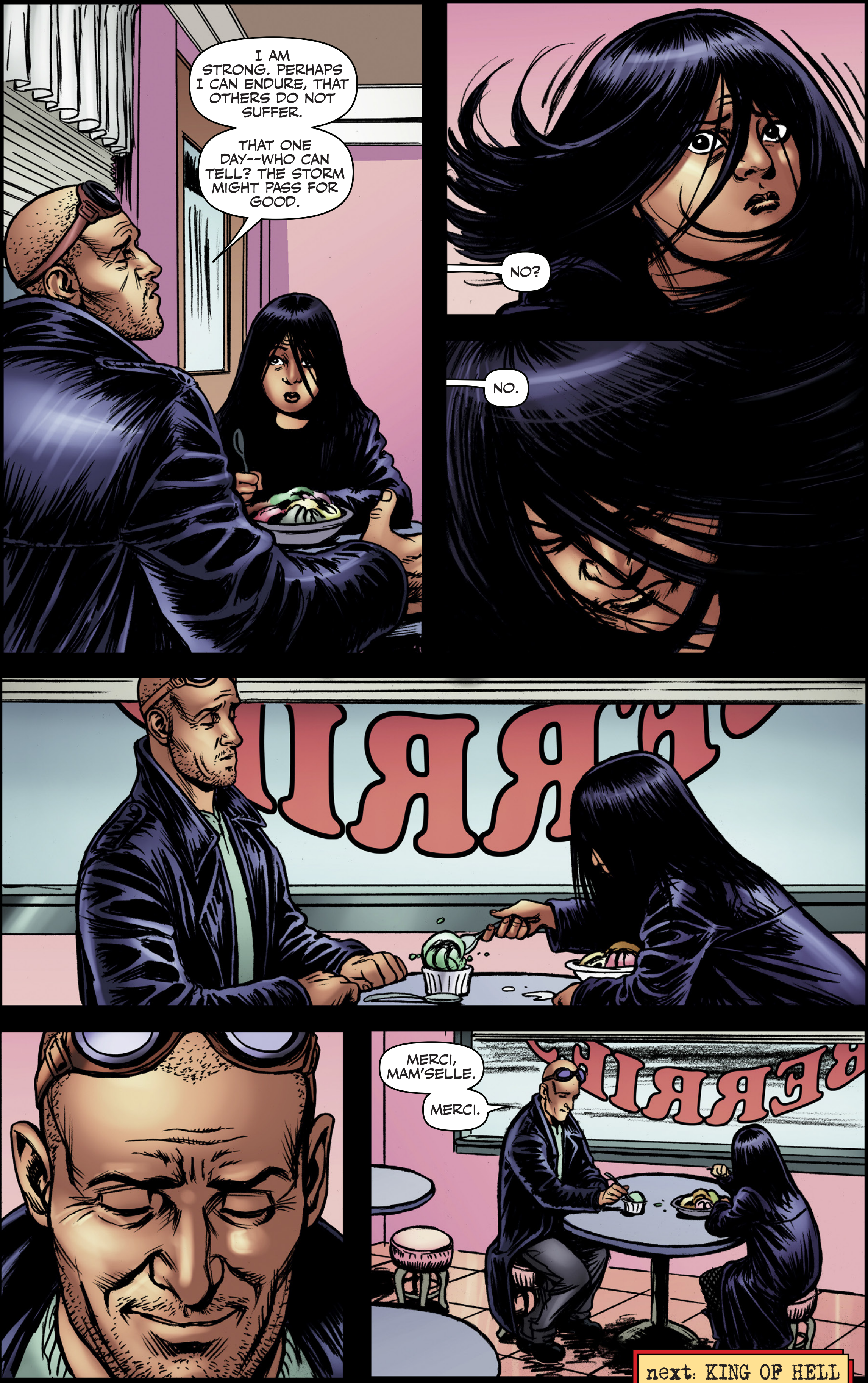

LARGE SUMS OF MONEY REGULARLY GO OUT--ON THE BASIS OF SOMEWHAT SCANT JUSTIFICATION FROM YOUR END. WITH THAT IN MIND, I'VE DRAFTED THESE *CLAIMS FORMS* FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS: SIMPLE, CLEAR, EASY TO READ AND USE, AND THOROUGHLY COMPREHENSIVE.
SO COMPREHENSIVE, IN FACT, THAT I'D ALSO LIKE TO SEE *BACKDATED* FORMS FOR ALL OF YOUR ACTIVITIES SINCE--
MONKEY.
ALL BULLSHIT ASIDE.
YOU AIN'T TOO PLEASED WITH THE PAPERWORK UP 'TIL NOW, FAIR ENOUGH. BUT I GUARANTEE YOU'RE GONNA WANNA READ THE NEXT BIT.
DIRECTOR KESSLER.
W--
DIRECTOR KESSLER.
Y--
DIRECTOR KESSLER.
NO?
CAN'T MANAGE IT?
NOT EVEN A LITTLE ONE?
WELL, I'LL LEAVE YOU TO WORK ON THAT. AND ON THESE, OF COURSE.
I HAVE A TRAIN TO CATCH.
...I AM A BROKEN FUCKIN' MAN.


7
BE STRONG.
HE'S STRONG SO YOU'RE STRONG.
ONLY WAY.
JESUS.

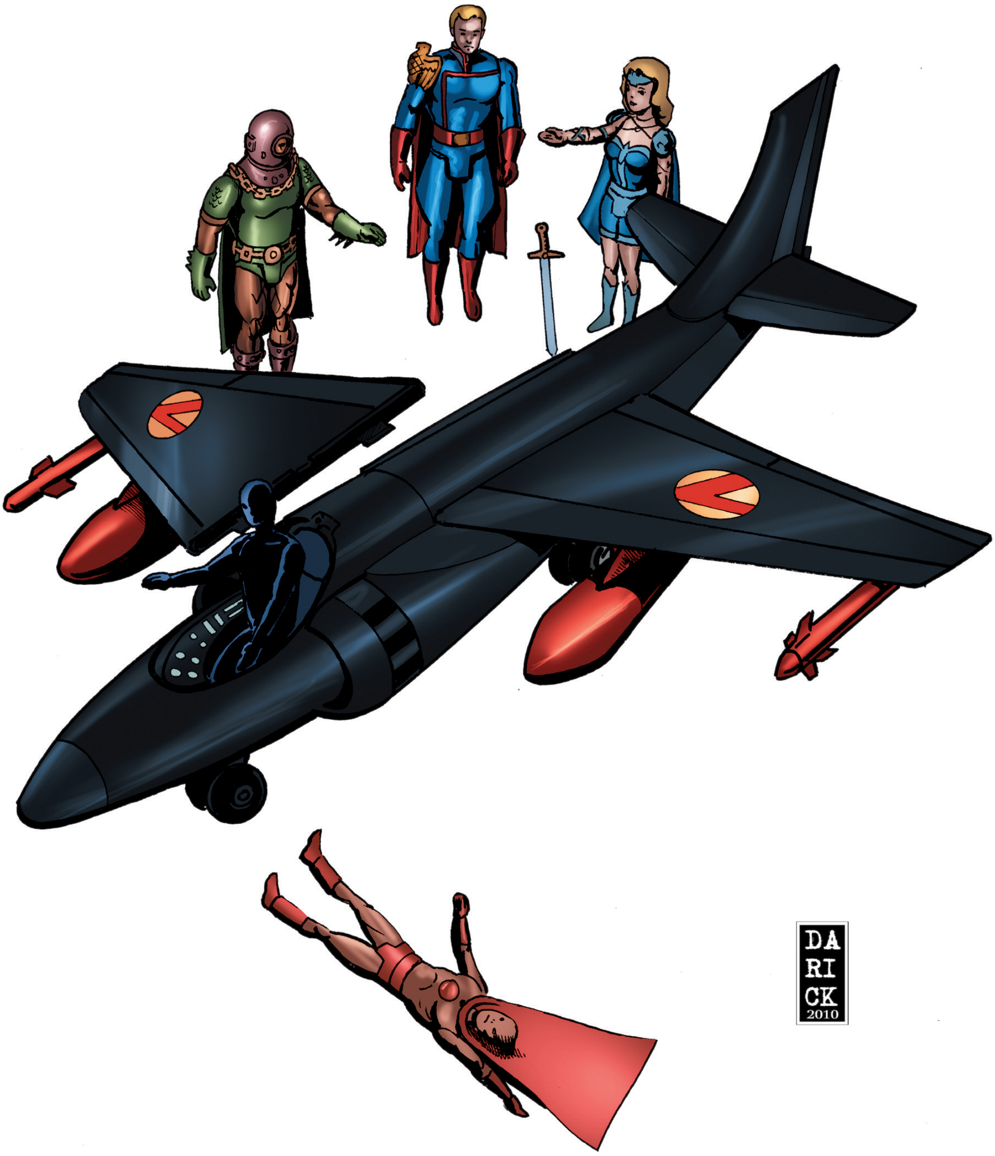

THAT WOULD CERTAINLY BE A START.
YES, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I MEAN. EVERYONE INVOLVED. EVERY NAME ON EVERY SIGN-OFF.
PLEASE DO.
SO...?
THE AIRCRAFT WAS BOUGHT SURPLUS BY RED RIVER, AFTER SEEING SERVICE IN PAKISTAN. RECONDITIONED, JUST LIKE THE ONE BEFORE IT.
UNFORTUNATELY--INCREDIBLY--NO ONE THOUGHT TO CHECK THE CANNON ARMAMENT. WHICH STILL CONTAINED LIVE AMMUNITION FROM OPERATIONS FLOWN IN COMBAT.
BUT IF IT WAS RECONDITIONED...
IT WAS REFUELED. I SUSPECT THAT ANYTHING ELSE WOULD HAVE BEEN A BONUS.
I'VE ORDERED ANOTHER, AS WELL AS A REPLACEMENT INSTRUCTOR.
HOPEFULLY SOMEONE WHO CAN ACTUALLY DO THE JOB...
YOU REALLY THINK IT WAS HIS FAULT?
DON'T YOU?
HOW IS ANYONE SUPPOSED TO EXPLAIN PILOTING A COMPLEX FIGHTER JET TO *BLACK NOIR?* AND IF HE TAKES IT INTO HIS HEAD TO START SCRABBLING AROUND AND PRESSING WHATEVER SWITCHES HE LIKES THE LOOK OF, WHO'S GOING TO STOP HIM?
ARMED OR UNARMED, A PLANE LIKE THAT IS POTENTIALLY LETHAL. I DON'T KNOW WHY WE WANT TO LET HIM LOOSE WITH IT IN THE FIRST PLACE.


YOU'VE READ THE SAME P.R. REQUESTS THAT I HAVE. AND VICTORY ARE ALWAYS PUSHING FOR IT; EVERY TIME HE FLIES INTO SOME EVENT ON THE DEEP'S BACK, THEY HAVE TO FIELD INNUMERATE QUERIES ABOUT THE PLANE IN THE COMICS.
THERE'S MERCHANDISING, THERE'S THE SUPERPOWER-IN-DEFENSE ANGLE...
WHICH I HOPE WILL YIELD APPROPRIATE DIVIDENDS. OTHERWISE IT'S A LOT OF EXPENSE TO SATISFY THE NEAT AND TIDY MINDS OF GEEKS.
AND ALL OF THIS ASSUMES THAT--
UM...
IF I'M... EXCEEDING MY...
GO ON.
YOU MAY AS WELL.
WELL...WE'RE ASSUMING THAT IT CAN ACTUALLY BE DONE. THAT HE CAN BE TAUGHT TO FLY.
THROWING MONEY AT A PROBLEM ISN'T LIKE A MAGIC SPELL. THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT SIMPLY CAN'T BE MADE TO WORK.
HMMM.
I AGREE. COMPLETELY, AS A MATTER OF FACT.
WHEN WE GET BACK, CONTACT RED RIVER AND CANCEL MY REQUEST FOR BOTH AIRCRAFT AND PILOT.
VERY GOOD.
AFTER YOU, MS. BRADLEY.


I HAVE BEEN THINKING.
JEN & BERRIES
28
I WONDER IF YOU AND I SHOULD GO AWAY QUITE SOON.
SOMETIMES I FEAR THE BOYS ARE ON A PATH THAT...
WELL.
WHEREVER THEY GO, THE LIFE IS BAD FOR YOU. SUPES OR GANGSTERS, THE NATURE OF THE TARGET DOES NOT MATTER: TO INDULGE THE FURY IN YOUR HEART IS BAD FOR YOU.
YOU ARE A HUMAN BEING, NOT A WEAPON. AND YOU ARE NOT RESPECTED AS YOU SHOULD BE.
NOR AM I.
WE SHOULD GO AWAY. SOMEWHERE FAR AND HONEST, UNDER THE SKY. AND IF THAT NEED ARISES IN YOU...
THERE IS ME.


I AM STRONG. PERHAPS I CAN ENDURE, THAT OTHERS DO NOT SUFFER.
THAT ONE DAY--WHO CAN TELL? THE STORM MIGHT PASS FOR GOOD.
NO?
NO.
MERCI, MAM'SELLE.
MERCI.
next: KING OF HELL

FORTY-NINE


DA
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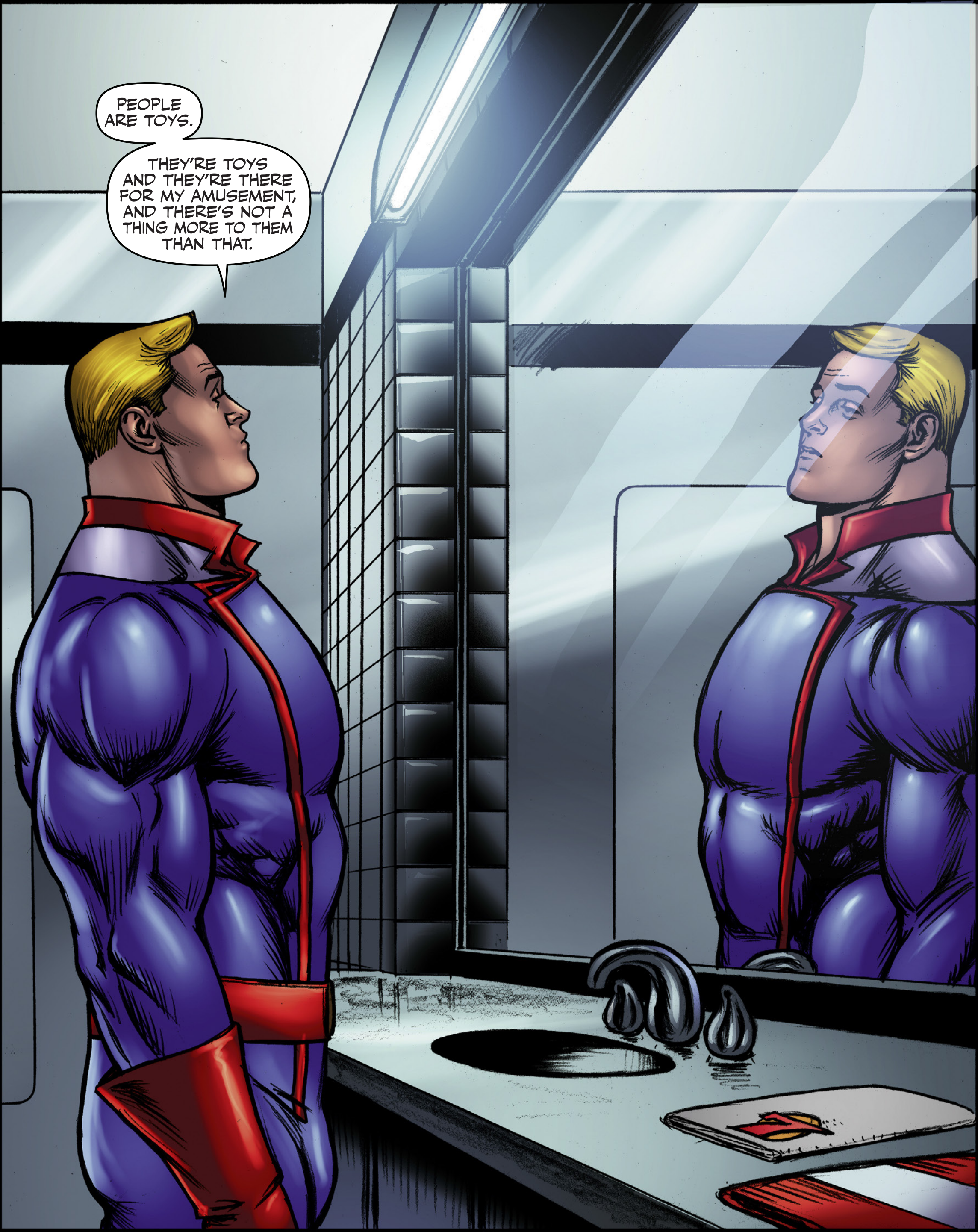
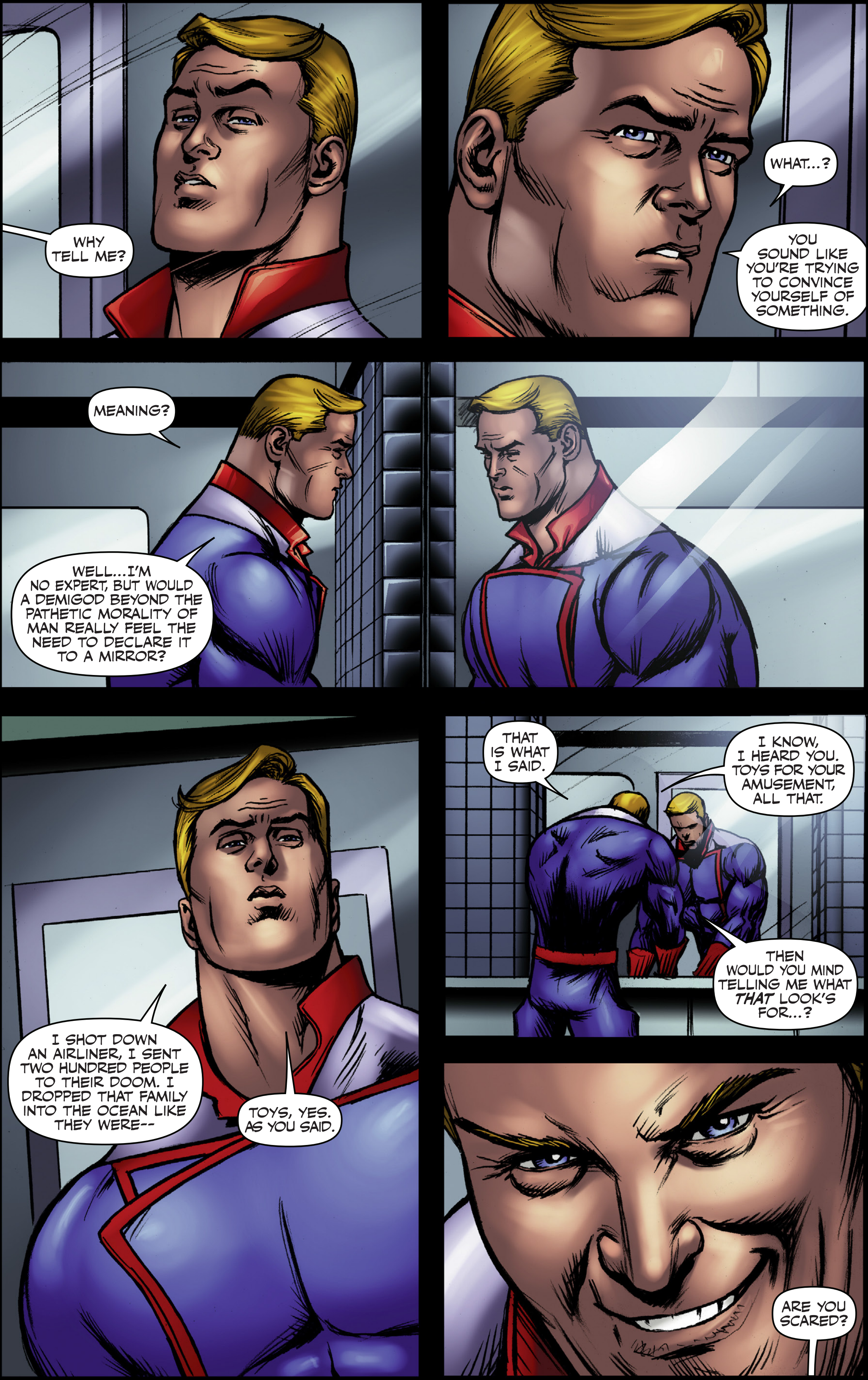
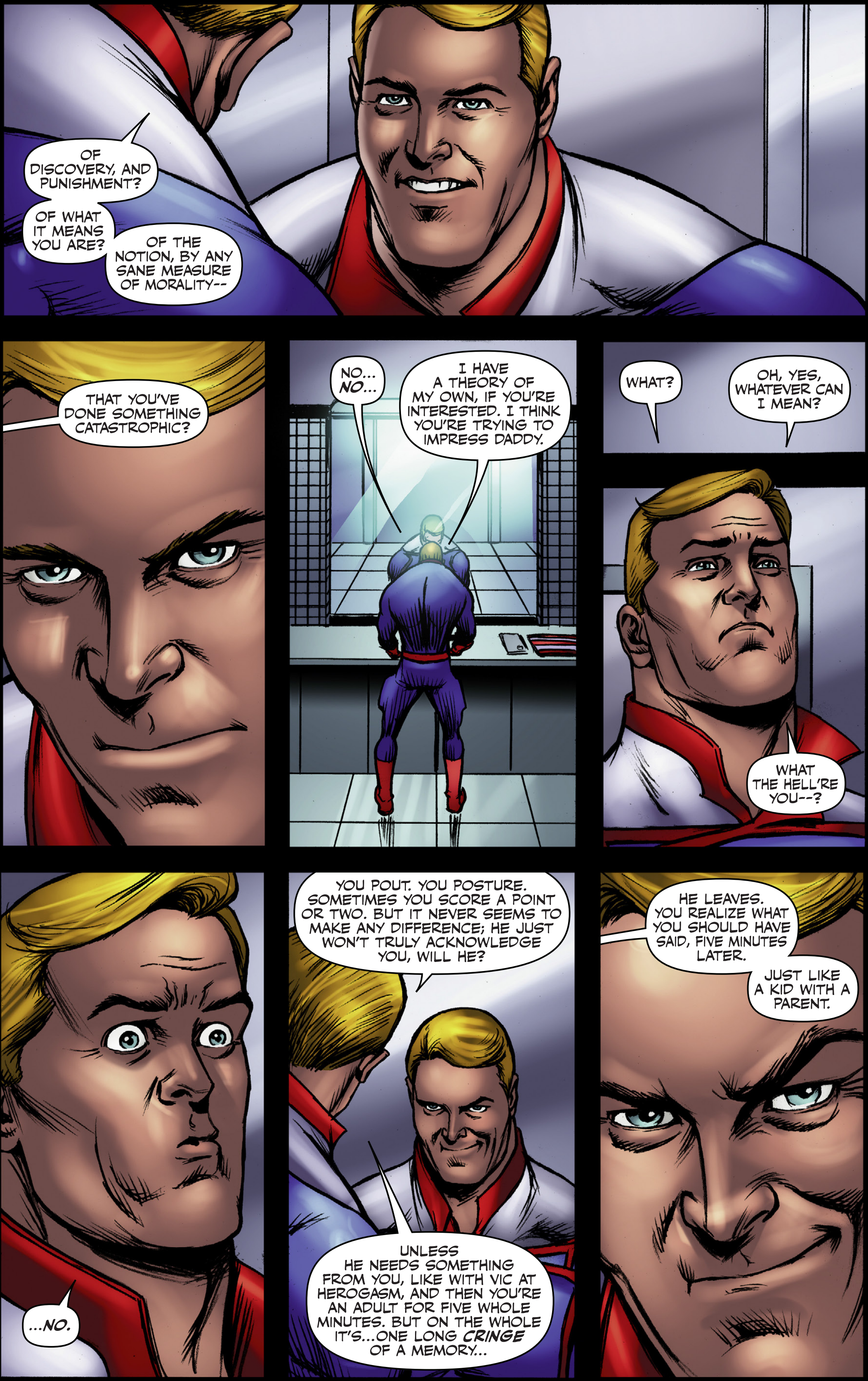
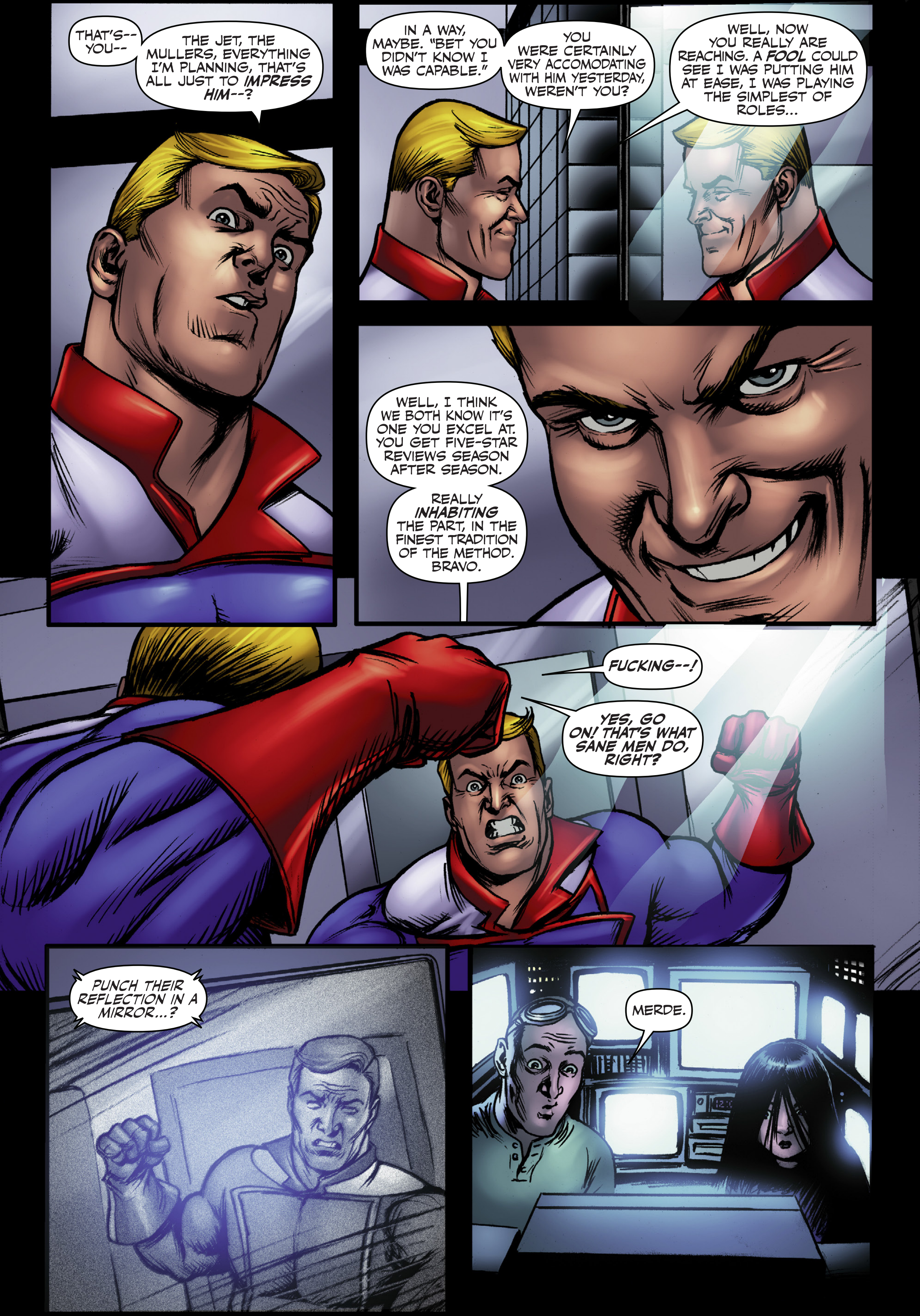

PEOPLE ARE TOYS.
THEY'RE TOYS AND THEY'RE THERE FOR MY AMUSEMENT, AND THERE'S NOT A THING MORE TO THEM THAN THAT.

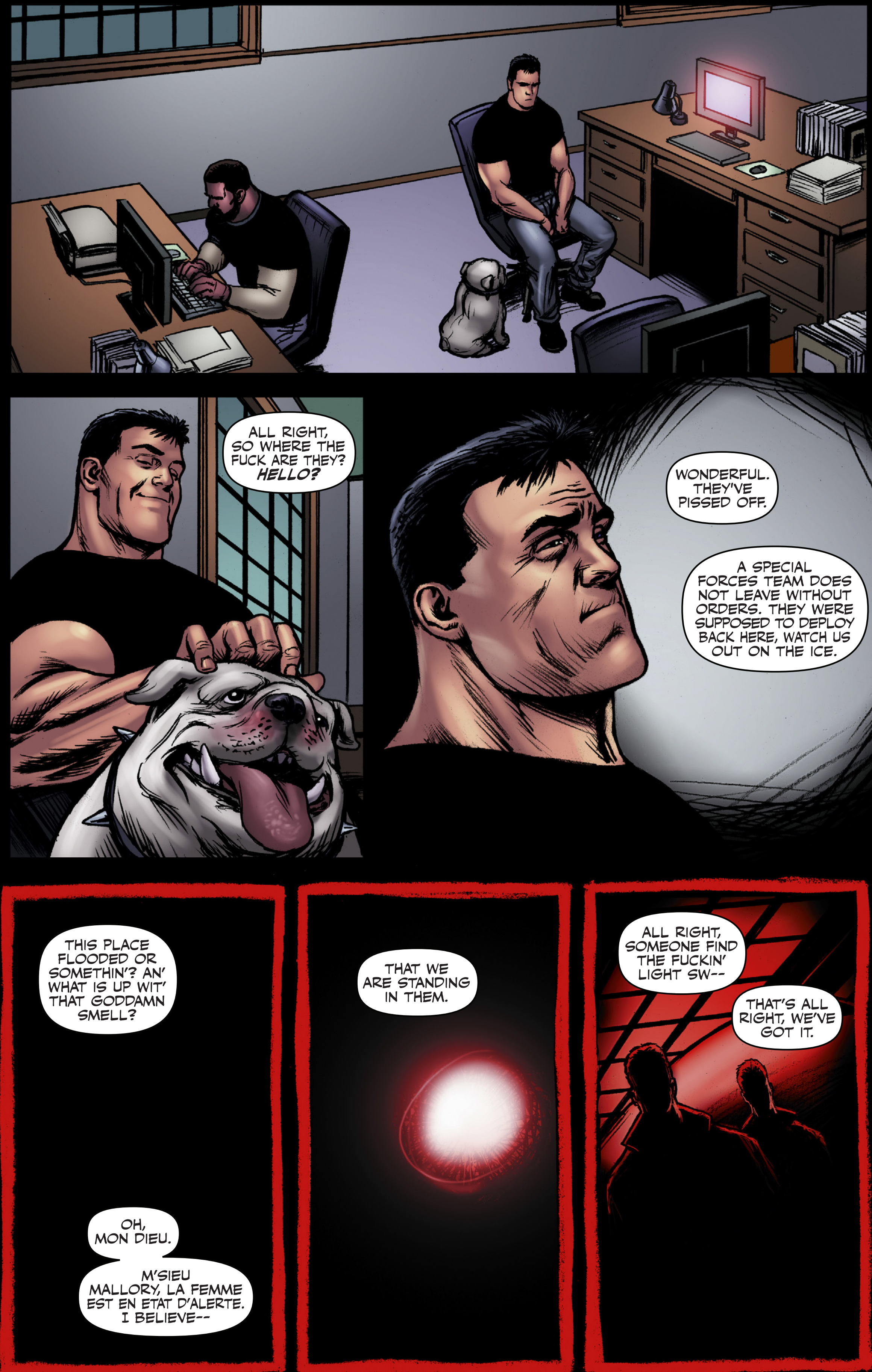
PROPER PREPARATION AND PLANNING

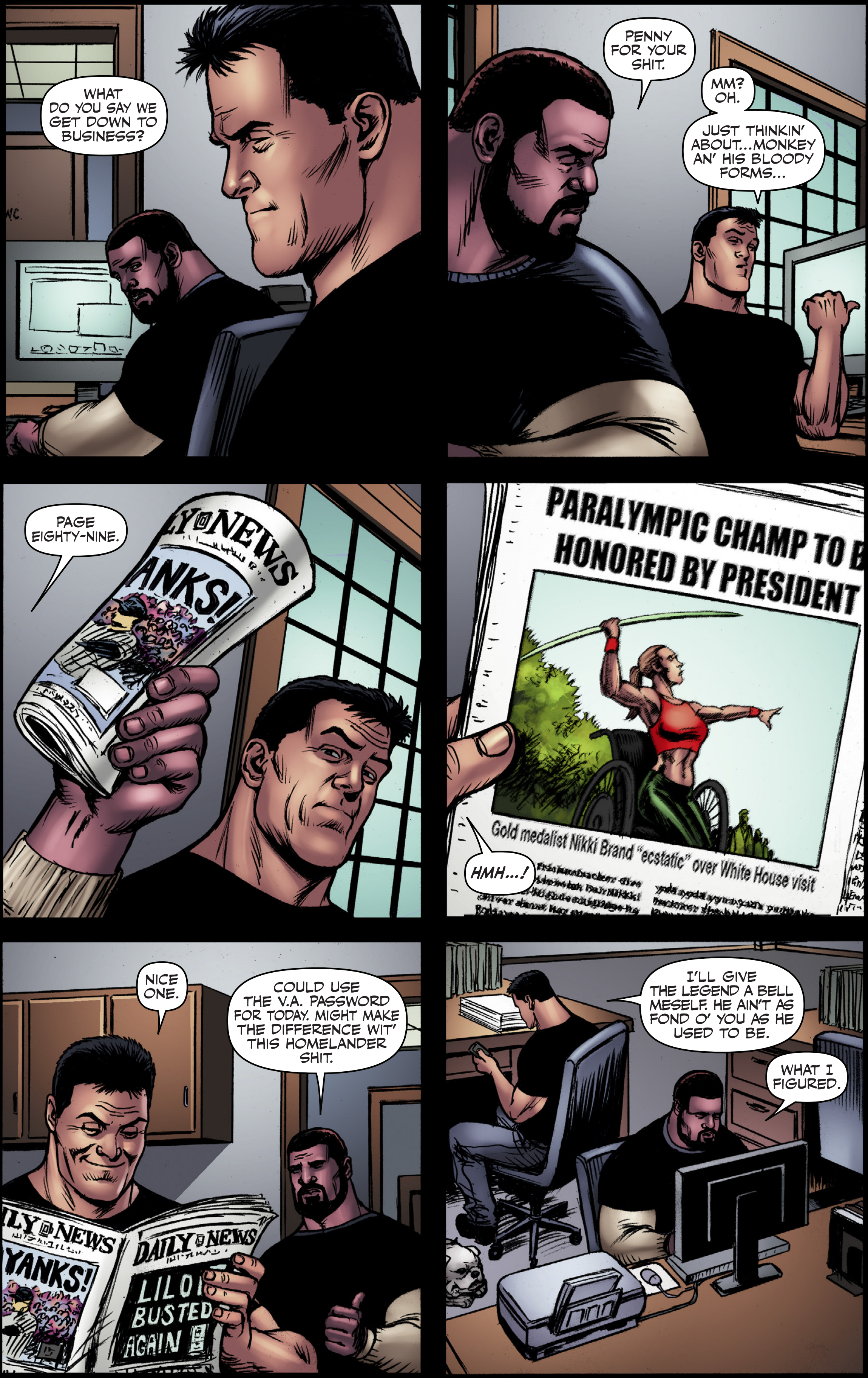
part two

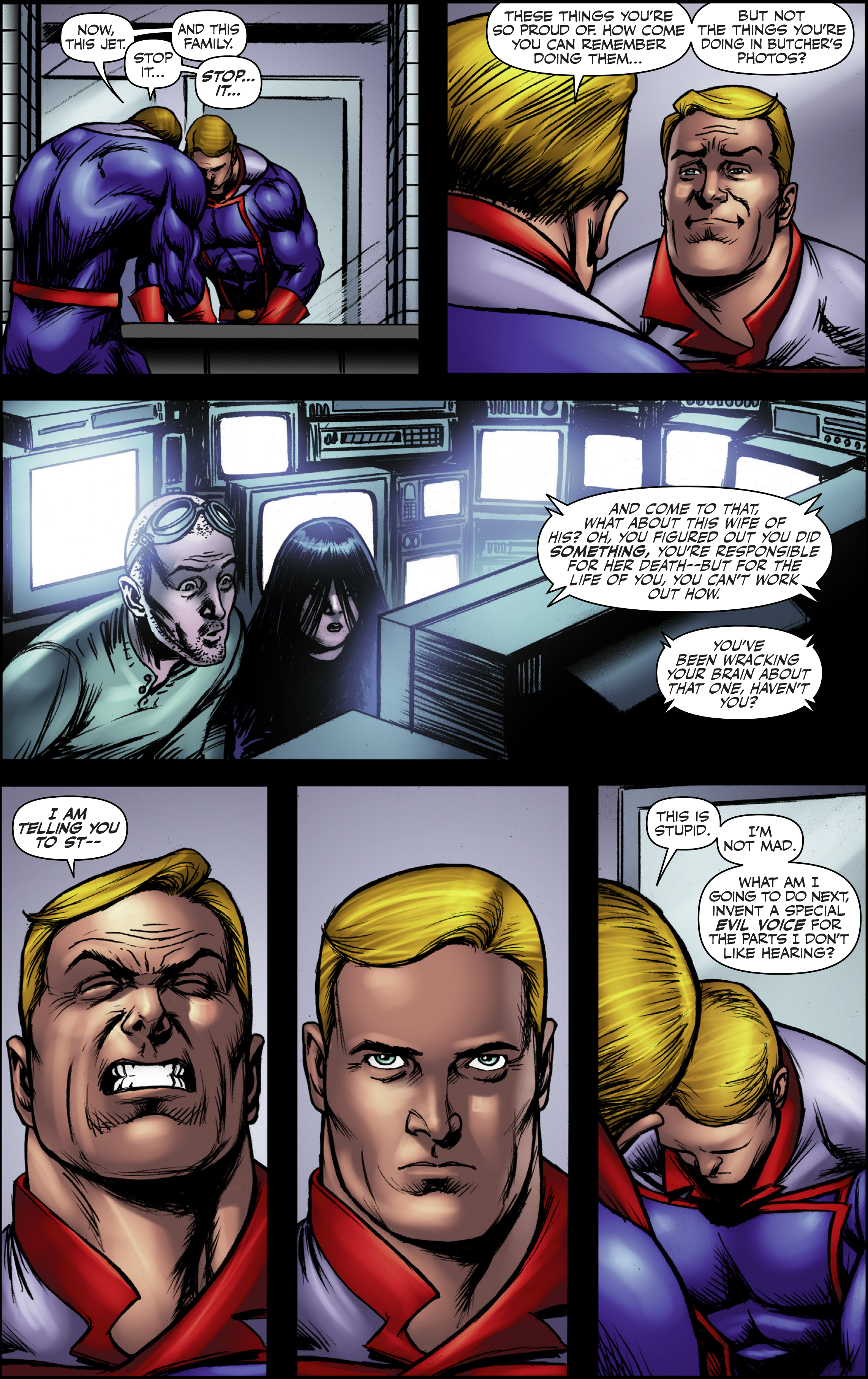

WHY TELL ME?
WHAT...?
YOU SOUND LIKE YOU'RE TRYING TO CONVINCE YOURSELF OF SOMETHING.
MEANING?
WELL...I'M NO EXPERT, BUT WOULD A DEMIGOD BEYOND THE PATHETIC MORALITY OF MAN REALLY FEEL THE NEED TO DECLARE IT TO A MIRROR?
I SHOT DOWN AN AIRLINER, I SENT TWO HUNDRED PEOPLE TO THEIR DOOM. I DROPPED THAT FAMILY INTO THE OCEAN LIKE THEY WERE--
TOYS, YES. AS YOU SAID.
THAT IS WHAT I SAID.
I KNOW, I HEARD YOU. TOYS FOR YOUR AMUSEMENT, ALL THAT.
THEN WOULD YOU MIND TELLING ME WHAT *THAT* LOOK'S FOR...?
ARE YOU SCARED?

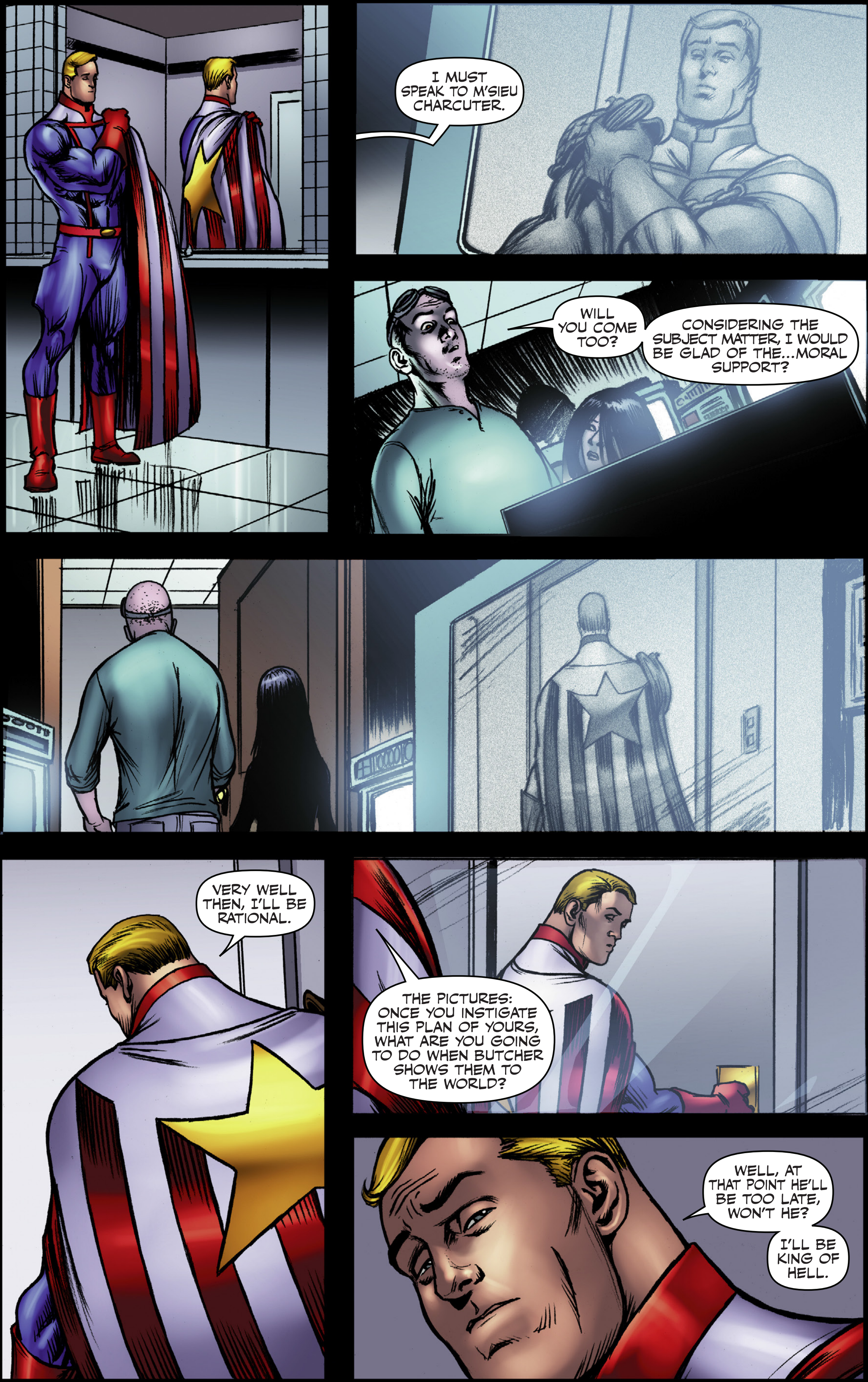

OF DISCOVERY, AND PUNISHMENT?
OF WHAT IT MEANS YOU ARE?
OF THE NOTION, BY ANY SANE MEASURE OF MORALITY--
THAT YOU'VE DONE SOMETHING CATASTROPHIC?
NO... *NO*...
I HAVE A THEORY OF MY OWN, IF YOU'RE INTERESTED. I THINK YOU'RE TRYING TO IMPRESS DADDY.
WHAT?
OH, YES, WHATEVER CAN I MEAN?
WHAT THE HELL'RE YOU--?
...*NO*.
YOU POUT. YOU POSTURE. SOMETIMES YOU SCORE A POINT OR TWO. BUT IT NEVER SEEMS TO MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE; HE JUST WON'T TRULY ACKNOWLEDGE YOU, WILL HE?
UNLESS HE NEEDS SOMETHING FROM YOU, LIKE WITH VIC AT HEROGASM, AND THEN YOU'RE AN ADULT FOR FIVE WHOLE MINUTES. BUT ON THE WHOLE IT'S...ONE LONG *CRINGE* OF A MEMORY...
HE LEAVES. YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU SHOULD HAVE SAID, FIVE MINUTES LATER.
JUST LIKE A KID WITH A PARENT.

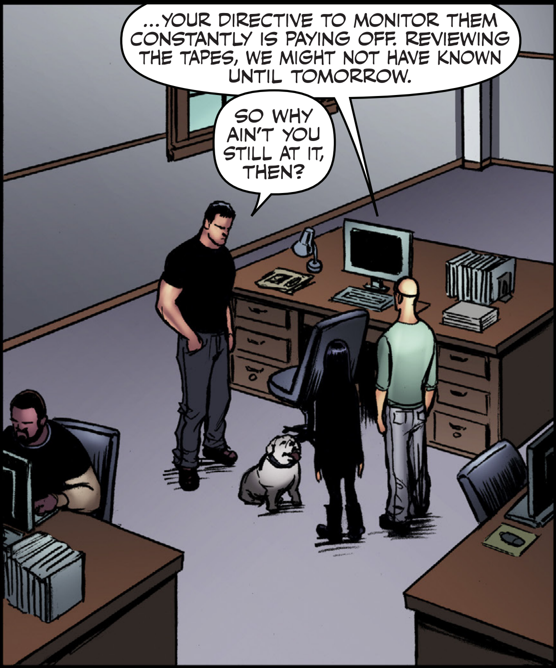

THAT'S-- YOU--
THE JET, THE MULLERS, EVERYTHING I'M PLANNING, THAT'S ALL JUST TO *IMPRESS HIM*--?
IN A WAY, MAYBE. "BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW I WAS CAPABLE."
YOU WERE CERTAINLY VERY ACCOMODATING WITH HIM YESTERDAY, WEREN'T YOU?
WELL, NOW YOU REALLY ARE REACHING. A *FOOL* COULD SEE I WAS PUTTING HIM AT EASE, I WAS PLAYING THE SIMPLEST OF ROLES...
WELL, I THINK WE BOTH KNOW IT'S ONE YOU EXCEL AT. YOU GET FIVE-STAR REVIEWS SEASON AFTER SEASON.
REALLY *INHABITING* THE PART, IN THE FINEST TRADITION OF THE METHOD. BRAVO.
FUCKING--!
YES, GO ON! THAT'S WHAT SANE MEN DO, RIGHT?
PUNCH THEIR REFLECTION IN A MIRROR...?
MERDE.

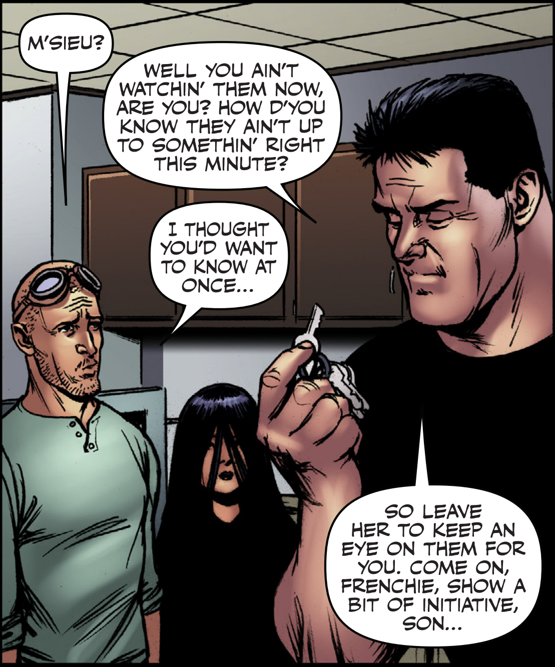

ALL RIGHT, SO WHERE THE FUCK ARE THEY? *HELLO?*
WONDERFUL. THEY'VE PISSED OFF.
A SPECIAL FORCES TEAM DOES NOT LEAVE WITHOUT ORDERS. THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO DEPLOY BACK HERE, WATCH US OUT ON THE ICE.
THIS PLACE FLOODED OR SOMETHIN'? AN' WHAT IS UP WIT' THAT GODDAMN SMELL?
OH, MON DIEU.
M'SIEU MALLORY, LA FEMME EST EN ETAT D'ALERTE. I BELIEVE--
THAT WE ARE STANDING IN THEM.
ALL RIGHT, SOMEONE FIND THE FUCKIN' LIGHT SW--
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, WE'VE GOT IT.

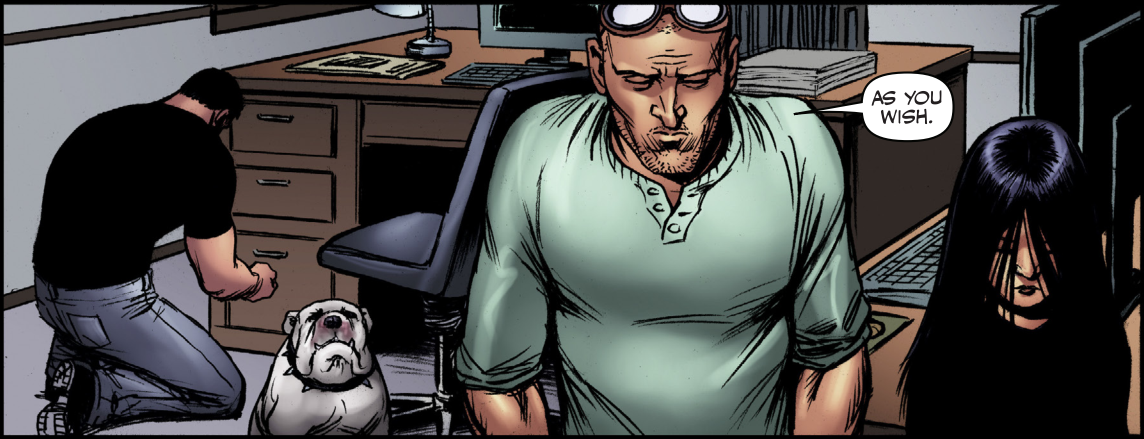

WHAT DO YOU SAY WE GET DOWN TO BUSINESS?
PENNY FOR YOUR SHIT.
MM? OH.
JUST THINKIN' ABOUT...MONKEY AN' HIS BLOODY FORMS...
PAGE EIGHTY-NINE.
NEWS
ANKS!
PARALYMPIC CHAMP TO B
HONORED BY PRESIDENT
Gold medalist Nikki Brand "ecstatic" over White House visit
HMH...!
NICE ONE.
COULD USE THE V.A. PASSWORD FOR TODAY. MIGHT MAKE THE DIFFERENCE WIT' THIS HOMELANDER SHIT.
LY NEWS
YANKS!
DAILY NEWS
LILO
BUSTED
AGAIN
I'LL GIVE THE LEGEND A BELL MESELF. HE AIN'T AS FOND O' YOU AS HE USED TO BE.
WHAT I FIGURED.

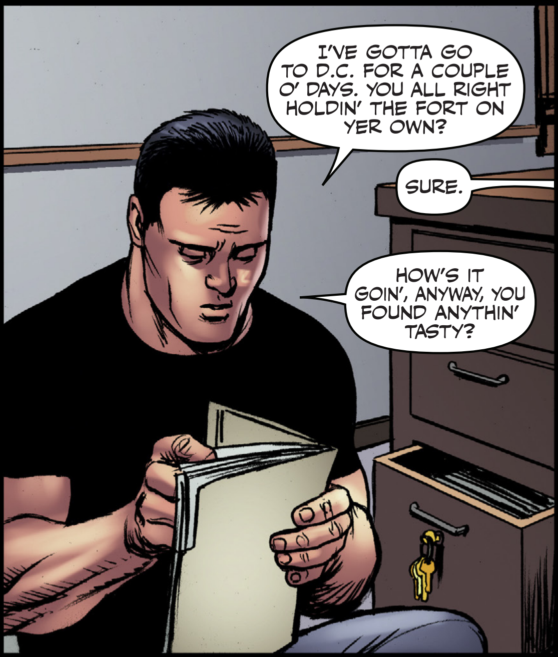

NOW, THIS JET.
AND THIS FAMILY.
STOP IT...
STOP... IT...
THESE THINGS YOU'RE SO PROUD OF. HOW COME YOU CAN REMEMBER DOING THEM...
BUT NOT THE THINGS YOU'RE DOING IN BUTCHER'S PHOTOS?
AND COME TO THAT, WHAT ABOUT THIS WIFE OF HIS? OH, YOU FIGURED OUT YOU DID SOMETHING, YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR HER DEATH--BUT FOR THE LIFE OF YOU, YOU CAN'T WORK OUT HOW.
YOU'VE BEEN WRACKING YOUR BRAIN ABOUT THAT ONE, HAVEN'T YOU?
I AM TELLING YOU TO ST--
THIS IS STUPID.
I'M NOT MAD.
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO NEXT, INVENT A SPECIAL EVIL VOICE FOR THE PARTS I DON'T LIKE HEARING?

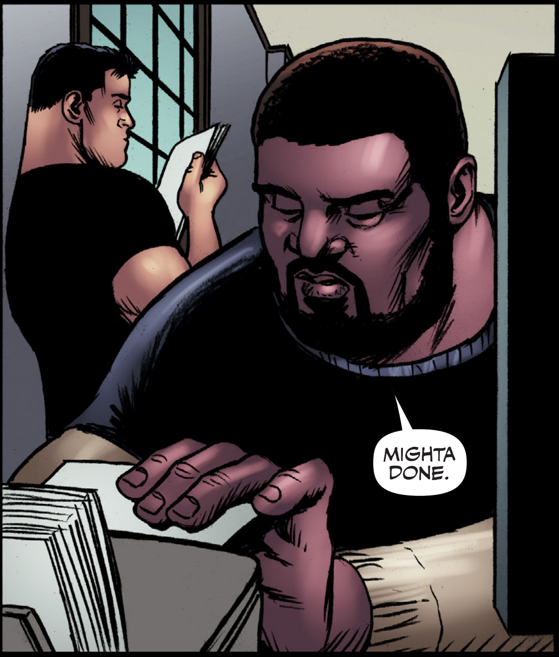

I MUST SPEAK TO M'SIEU CHARCUTER.
WILL YOU COME TOO?
CONSIDERING THE SUBJECT MATTER, I WOULD BE GLAD OF THE...MORAL SUPPORT?
VERY WELL THEN, I'LL BE RATIONAL.
THE PICTURES: ONCE YOU INSTIGATE THIS PLAN OF YOURS, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WHEN BUTCHER SHOWS THEM TO THE WORLD?
WELL, AT THAT POINT HE'LL BE TOO LATE, WON'T HE?
I'LL BE KING OF HELL.

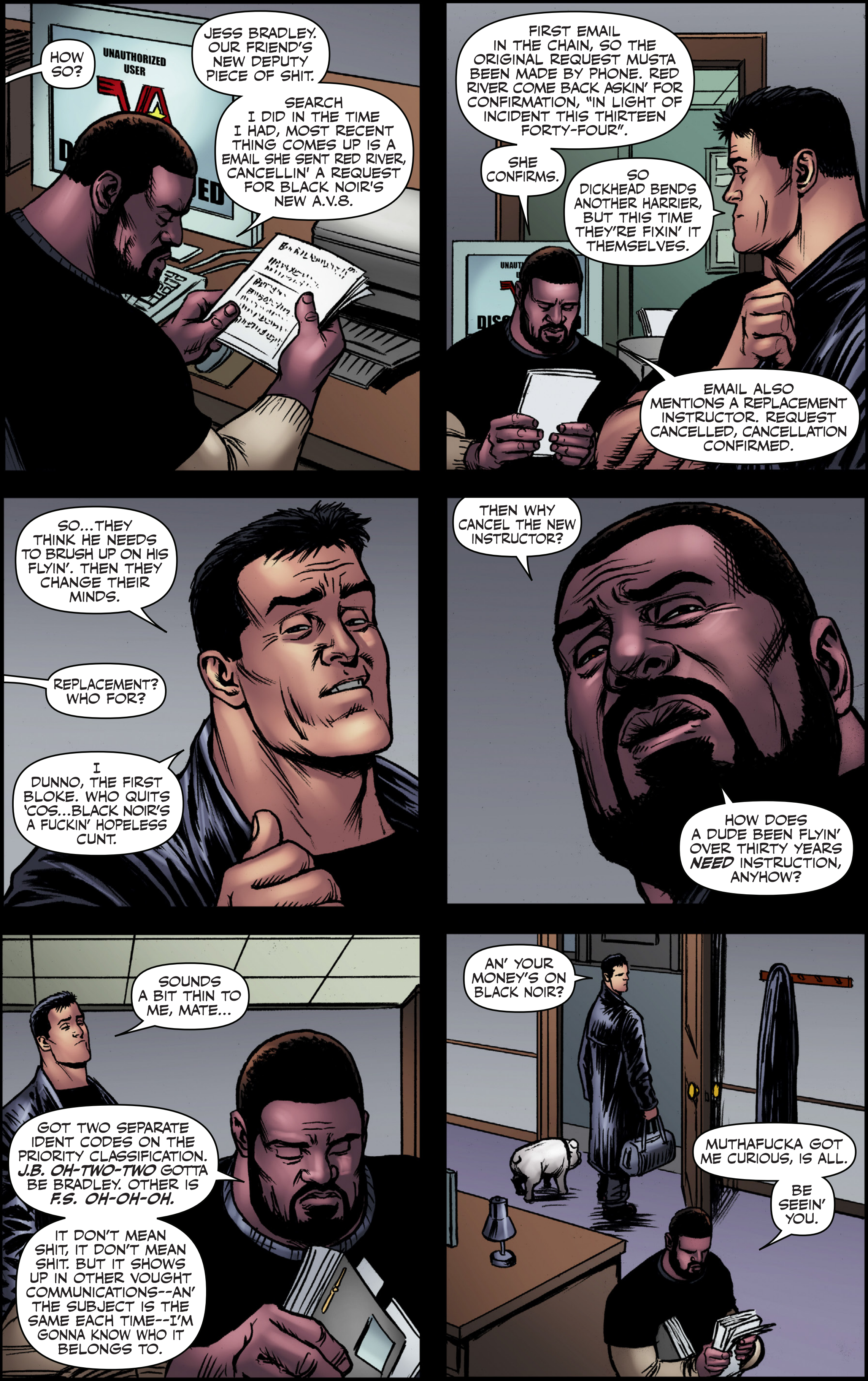

...YOUR DIRECTIVE TO MONITOR THEM CONSTANTLY IS PAYING OFF. REVIEWING THE TAPES, WE MIGHT NOT HAVE KNOWN UNTIL TOMORROW.
SO WHY AIN'T YOU STILL AT IT, THEN?

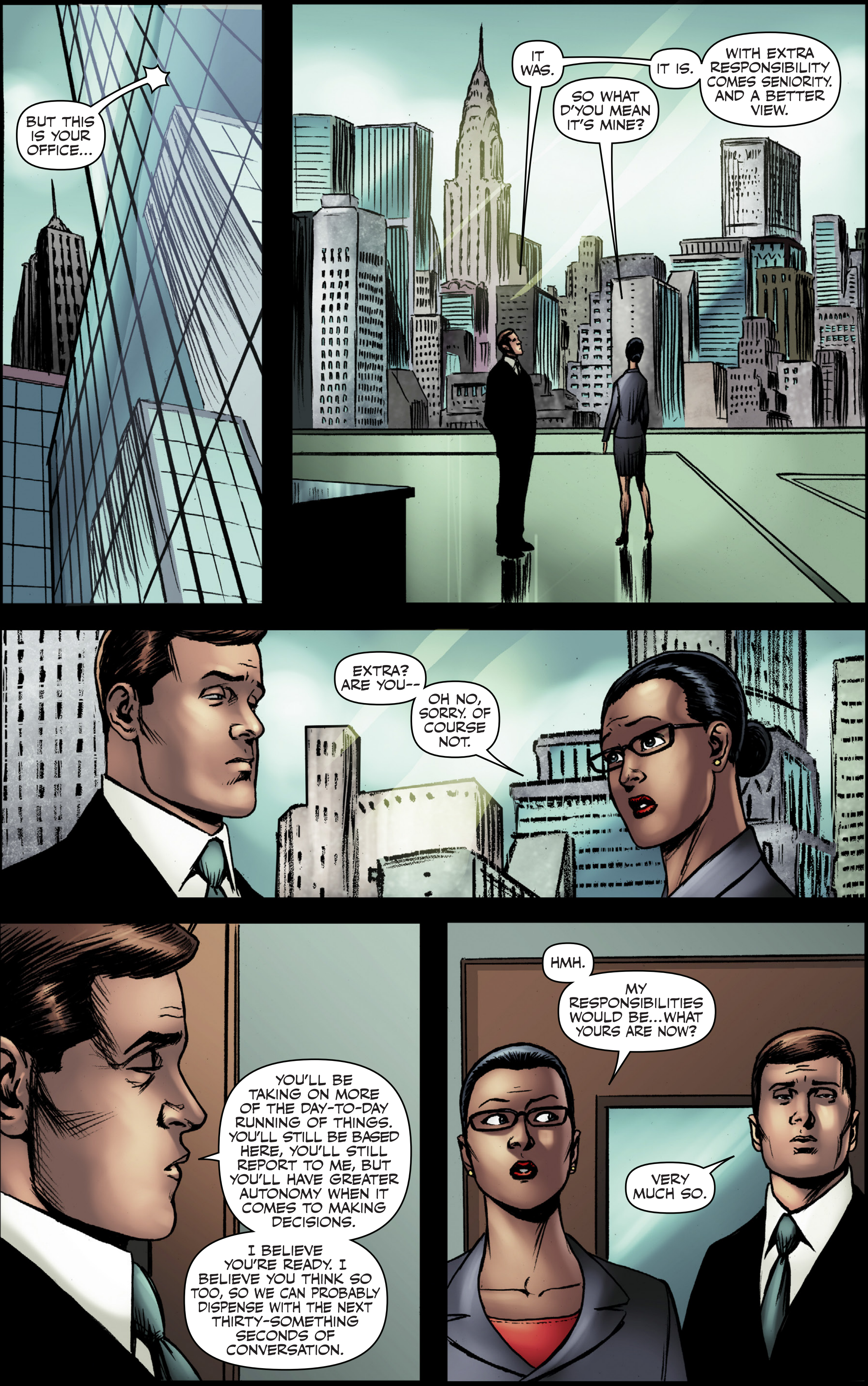

M'SIEU?
WELL YOU AIN'T WATCHIN' THEM NOW, ARE YOU? HOW D'YOU KNOW THEY AIN'T UP TO SOMETHIN' RIGHT THIS MINUTE?
I THOUGHT YOU'D WANT TO KNOW AT ONCE...
SO LEAVE HER TO KEEP AN EYE ON THEM FOR YOU. COME ON, FRENCHIE, SHOW A BIT OF INITIATIVE, SON...

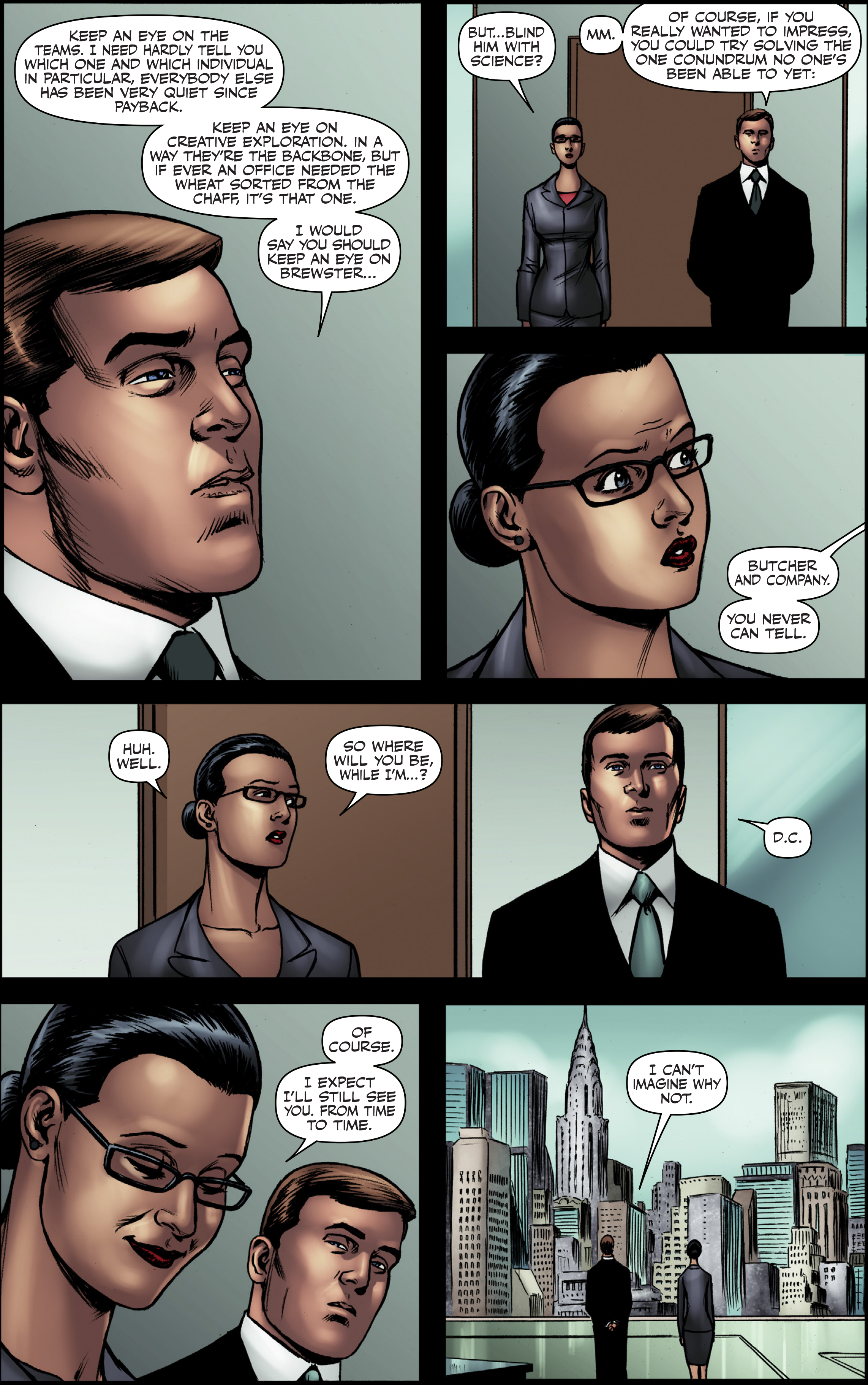

AS YOU WISH.

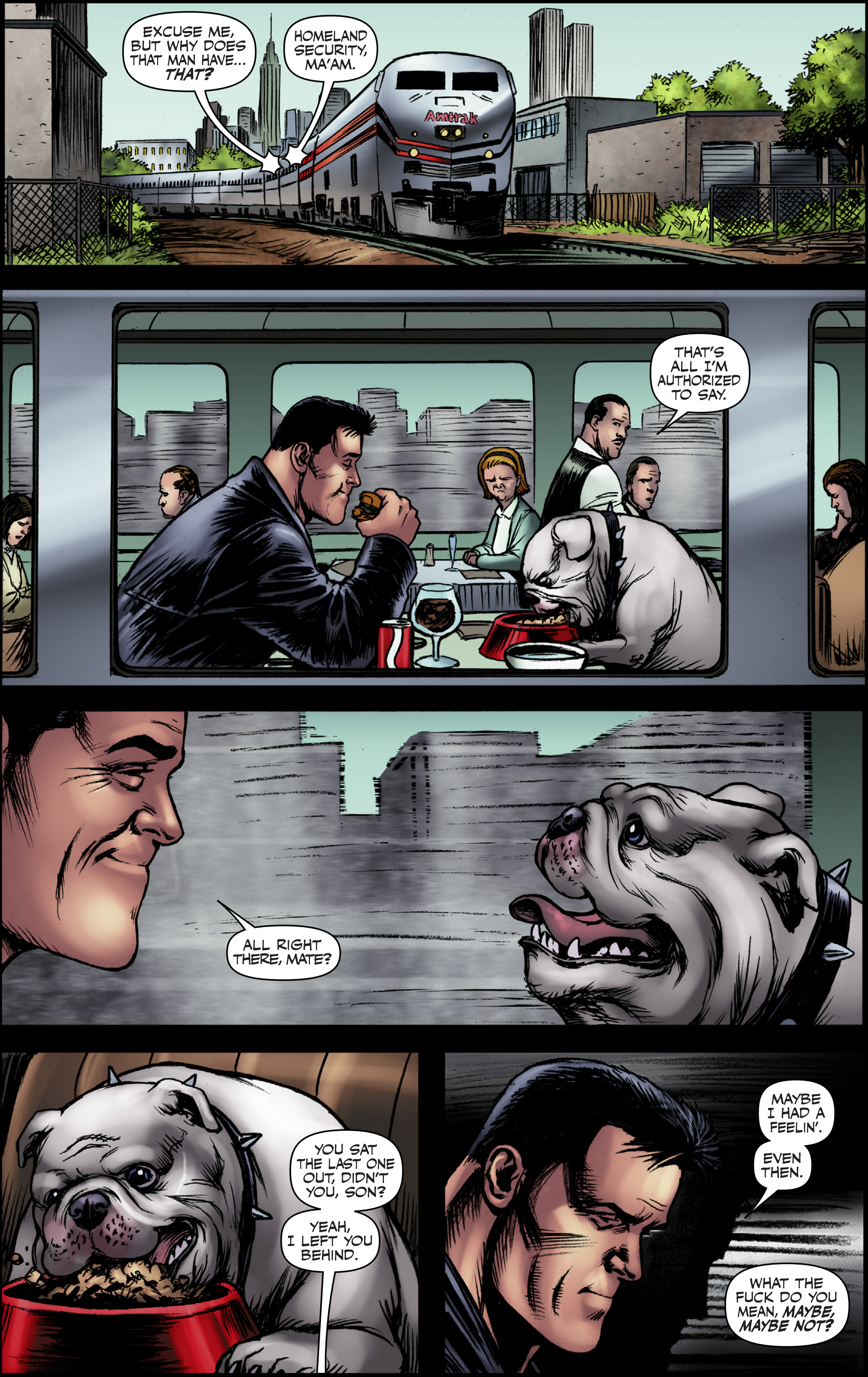

I'VE GOTTA GO TO D.C. FOR A COUPLE O' DAYS. YOU ALL RIGHT HOLDIN' THE FORT ON YER OWN?
SURE.
HOW'S IT GOIN', ANYWAY, YOU FOUND ANYTHIN' TASTY?

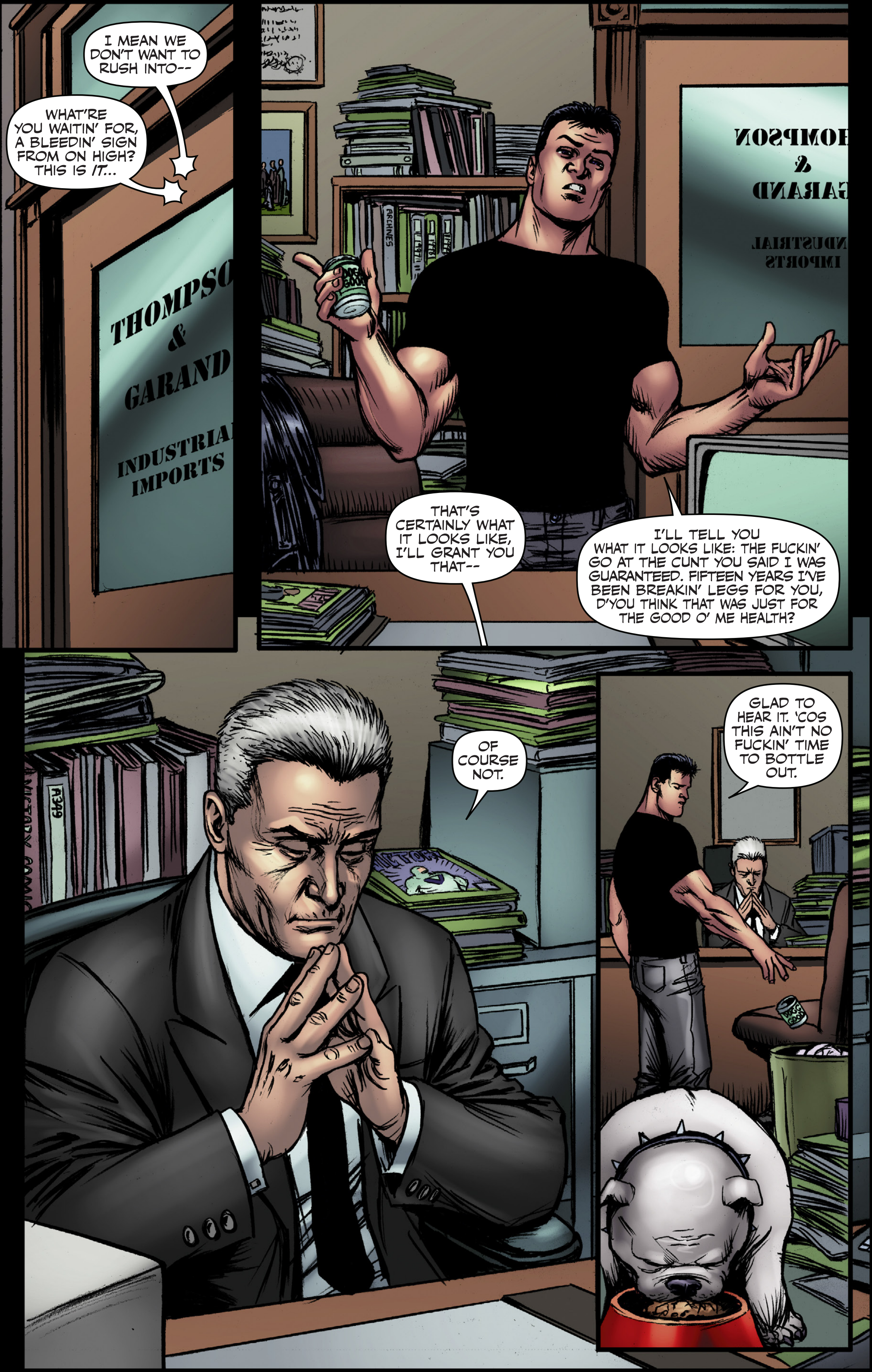

MIGHTA DONE.

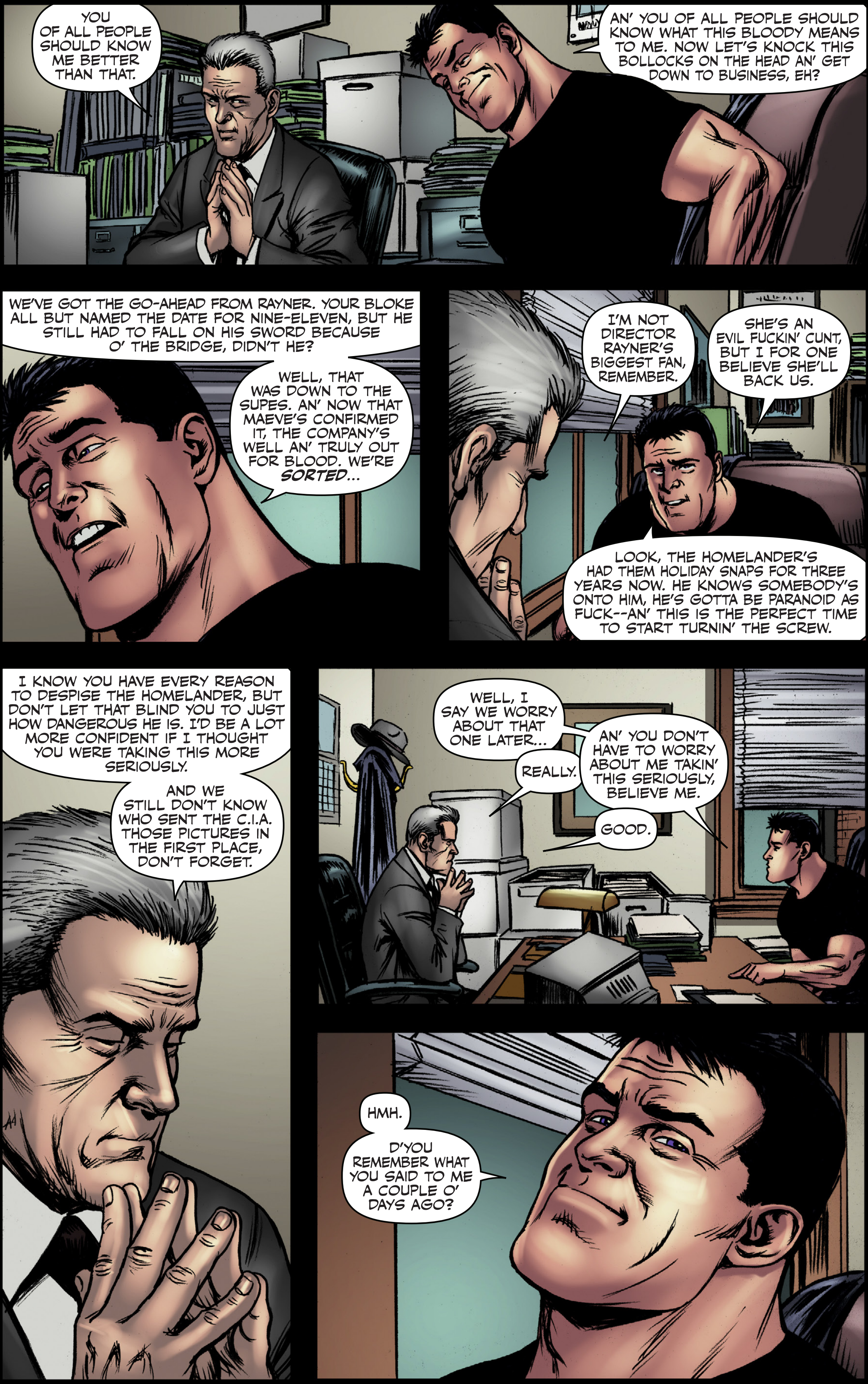

UNAUTHORIZED USER
HOW SO?
JESS BRADLEY. OUR FRIEND'S NEW DEPUTY PIECE OF SHIT.
SEARCH I DID IN THE TIME I HAD, MOST RECENT THING COMES UP IS A EMAIL SHE SENT RED RIVER, CANCELLIN' A REQUEST FOR BLACK NOIR'S NEW A.V.8.
FIRST EMAIL IN THE CHAIN, SO THE ORIGINAL REQUEST MUSTA BEEN MADE BY PHONE. RED RIVER COME BACK ASKIN' FOR CONFIRMATION, "IN LIGHT OF INCIDENT THIS THIRTEEN FORTY-FOUR".
SHE CONFIRMS.
SO DICKHEAD BENDS ANOTHER HARRIER, BUT THIS TIME THEY'RE FIXIN' IT THEMSELVES.
EMAIL ALSO MENTIONS A REPLACEMENT INSTRUCTOR. REQUEST CANCELLED, CANCELLATION CONFIRMED.
SO...THEY THINK HE NEEDS TO BRUSH UP ON HIS FLYIN'. THEN THEY CHANGE THEIR MINDS.
REPLACEMENT? WHO FOR?
I DUNNO, THE FIRST BLOKE. WHO QUITS 'COS...BLACK NOIR'S A FUCKIN' HOPELESS CUNT.
THEN WHY CANCEL THE NEW INSTRUCTOR?
HOW DOES A DUDE BEEN FLYIN' OVER THIRTY YEARS *NEED* INSTRUCTION, ANYHOW?
SOUNDS A BIT THIN TO ME, MATE...
GOT TWO SEPARATE IDENT CODES ON THE PRIORITY CLASSIFICATION. *J.B. OH-TWO-TWO* GOTTA BE BRADLEY. OTHER IS *F.S. OH-OH-OH.*
IT DON'T MEAN SHIT, IT DON'T MEAN SHIT. BUT IT SHOWS UP IN OTHER VOUGHT COMMUNICATIONS--AN' THE SUBJECT IS THE SAME EACH TIME--I'M GONNA KNOW WHO IT BELONGS TO.
AN' YOUR MONEY'S ON BLACK NOIR?
MUTHAFUCKA GOT ME CURIOUS, IS ALL.
BE SEEIN' YOU.

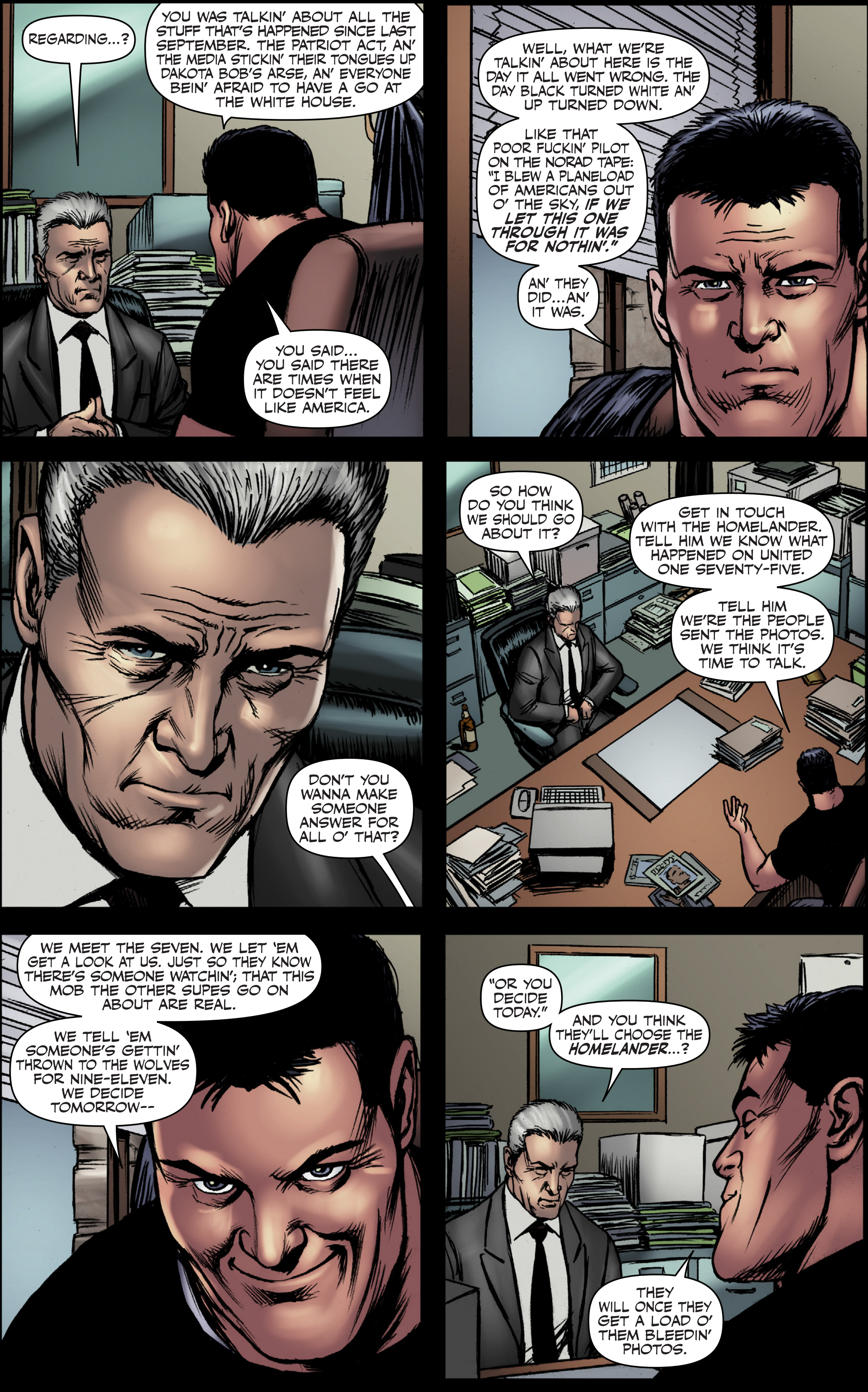

BUT THIS IS YOUR OFFICE...
IT WAS.
IT IS.
WITH EXTRA RESPONSIBILITY COMES SENIORITY. AND A BETTER VIEW.
SO WHAT D'YOU MEAN IT'S MINE?
EXTRA? ARE YOU--
OH NO, SORRY. OF COURSE NOT.
YOU'LL BE TAKING ON MORE OF THE DAY-TO-DAY RUNNING OF THINGS. YOU'LL STILL BE BASED HERE, YOU'LL STILL REPORT TO ME, BUT YOU'LL HAVE GREATER AUTONOMY WHEN IT COMES TO MAKING DECISIONS.
I BELIEVE YOU'RE READY. I BELIEVE YOU THINK SO TOO, SO WE CAN PROBABLY DISPENSE WITH THE NEXT THIRTY-SOMETHING SECONDS OF CONVERSATION.
HMH.
MY RESPONSIBILITIES WOULD BE...WHAT YOURS ARE NOW?
VERY MUCH SO.

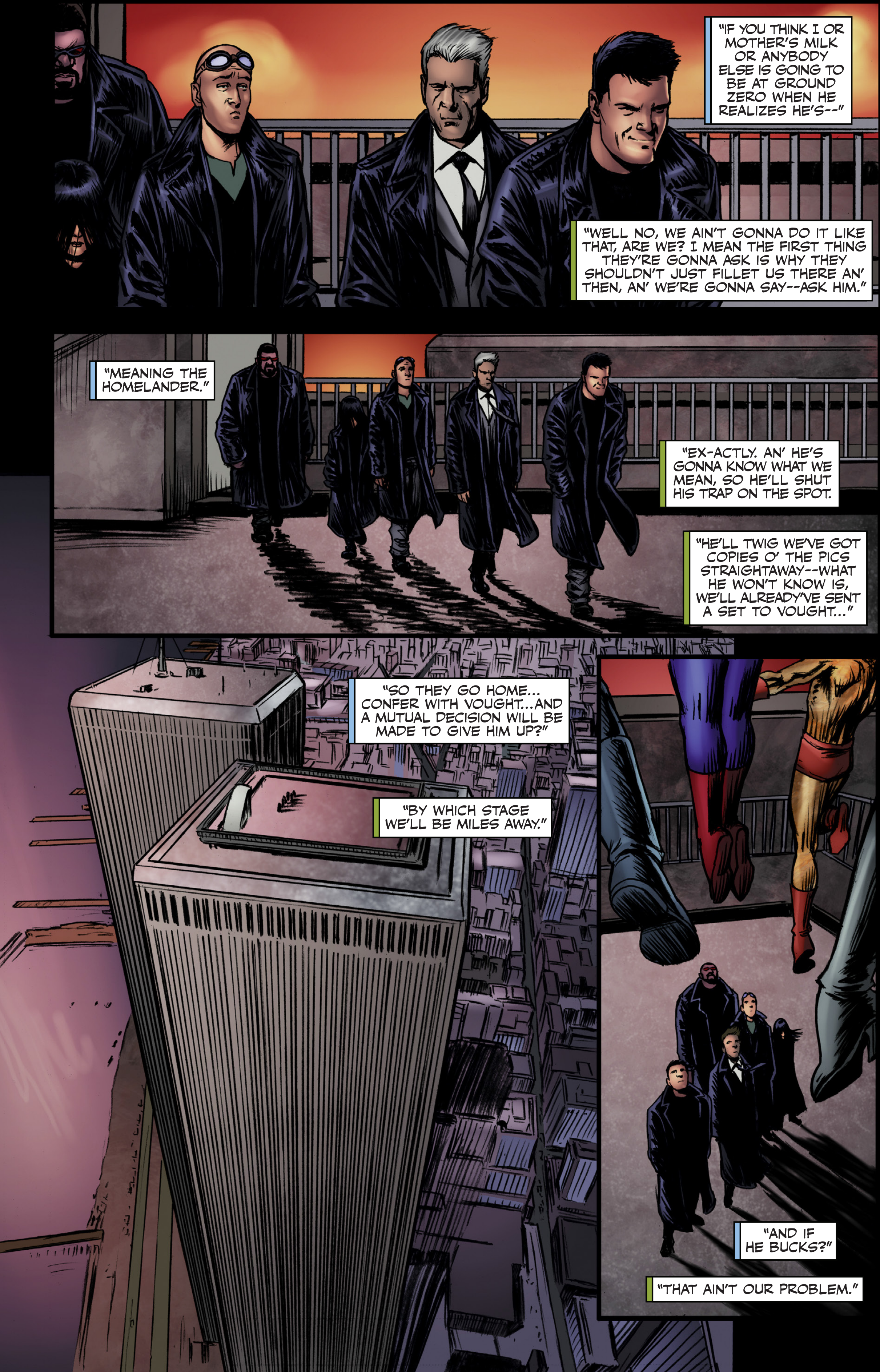

KEEP AN EYE ON THE TEAMS. I NEED HARDLY TELL YOU WHICH ONE AND WHICH INDIVIDUAL IN PARTICULAR, EVERYBODY ELSE HAS BEEN VERY QUIET SINCE PAYBACK.
KEEP AN EYE ON CREATIVE EXPLORATION. IN A WAY THEY'RE THE BACKBONE, BUT IF EVER AN OFFICE NEEDED THE WHEAT SORTED FROM THE CHAFF, IT'S THAT ONE.
I WOULD SAY YOU SHOULD KEEP AN EYE ON BREWSTER...
BUT...BLIND HIM WITH SCIENCE?
MM.
OF COURSE, IF YOU REALLY WANTED TO IMPRESS, YOU COULD TRY SOLVING THE ONE CONUNDRUM NO ONE'S BEEN ABLE TO YET:
BUTCHER AND COMPANY.
YOU NEVER CAN TELL.
HUH. WELL.
SO WHERE WILL YOU BE, WHILE I'M...?
D.C.
OF COURSE.
I EXPECT I'LL STILL SEE YOU. FROM TIME TO TIME.
I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY NOT.

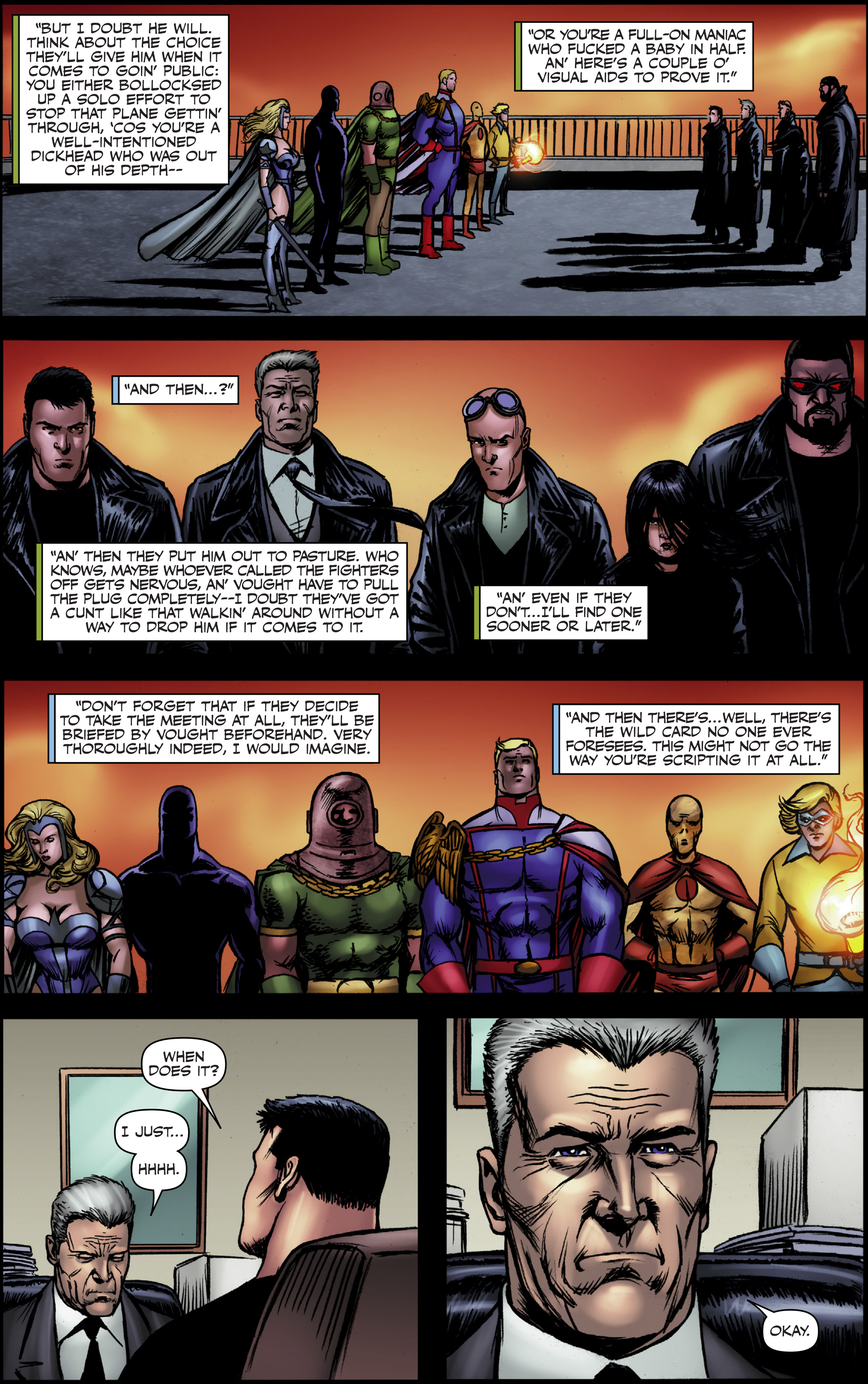

EXCUSE ME, BUT WHY DOES THAT MAN HAVE... *THAT?*
HOMELAND SECURITY, MA'AM.
Amtrak
THAT'S ALL I'M AUTHORIZED TO SAY.
ALL RIGHT THERE, MATE?
YOU SAT THE LAST ONE OUT, DIDN'T YOU, SON?
YEAH, I LEFT YOU BEHIND.
MAYBE I HAD A FEELIN'.
EVEN THEN.
WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU MEAN, *MAYBE, MAYBE NOT?*

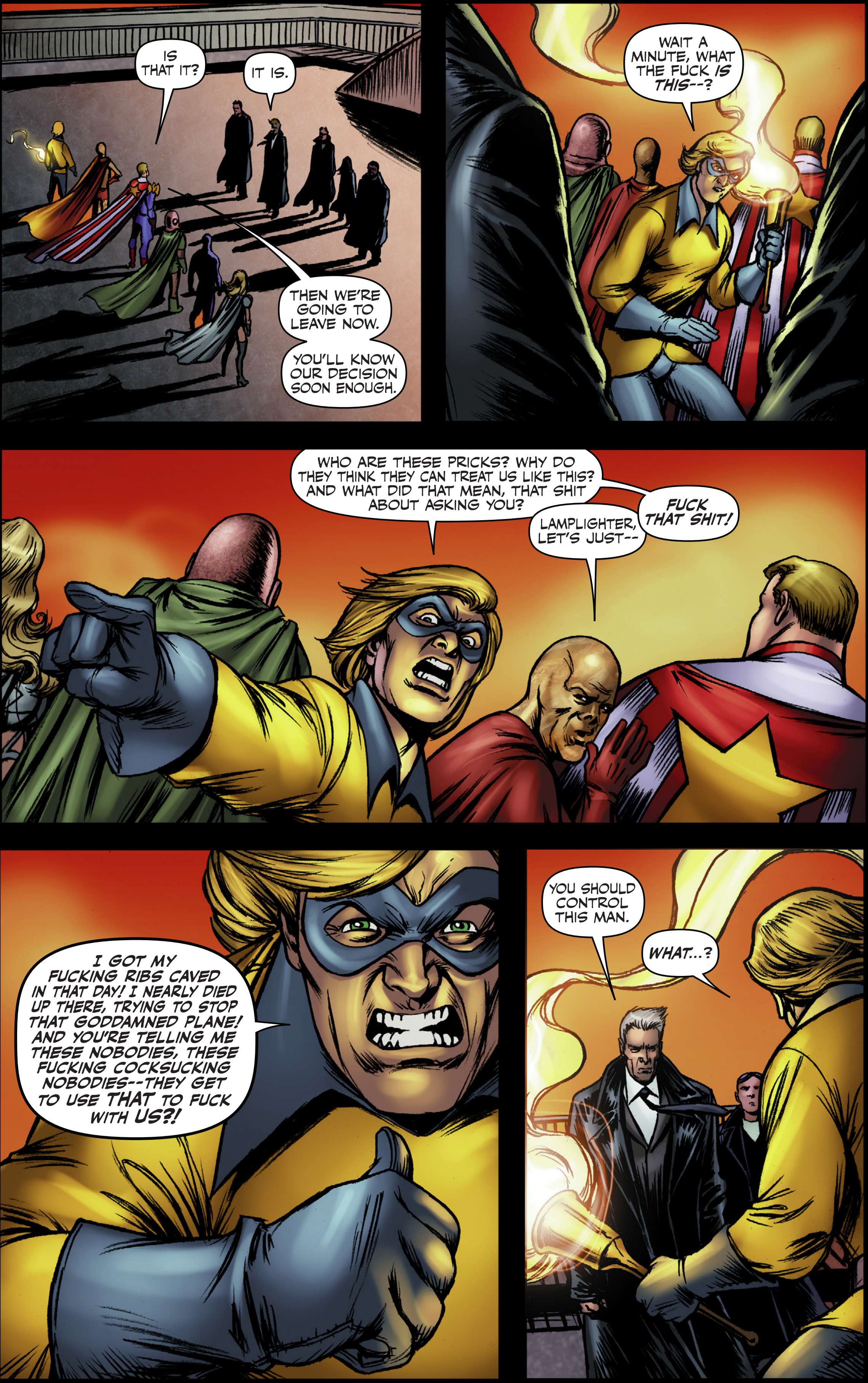

I MEAN WE DON'T WANT TO RUSH INTO--
WHAT'RE YOU WAITIN' FOR, A BLEEDIN' SIGN FROM ON HIGH? THIS IS *IT*...
THOMPSO & GARAND INDUSTRIAL IMPORTS
THAT'S CERTAINLY WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE, I'LL GRANT YOU THAT--
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE: THE FUCKIN' GO AT THE CUNT YOU SAID I WAS GUARANTEED. FIFTEEN YEARS I'VE BEEN BREAKIN' LEGS FOR YOU, D'YOU THINK THAT WAS JUST FOR THE GOOD O' ME HEALTH?
OF COURSE NOT.
GLAD TO HEAR IT. 'COS THIS AIN'T NO FUCKIN' TIME TO BOTTLE OUT.

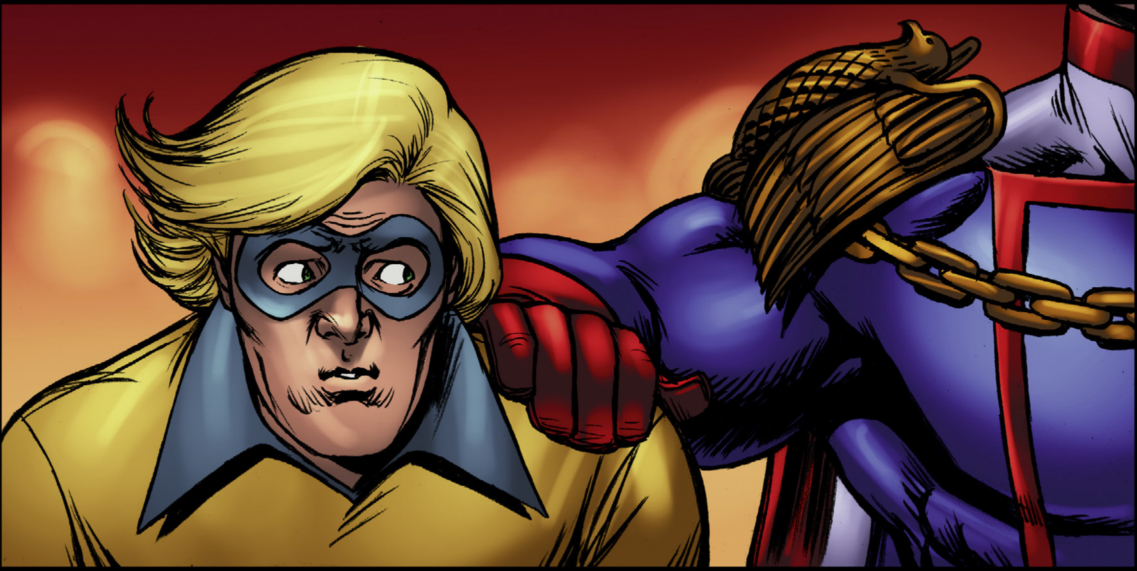

YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW ME BETTER THAN THAT.
AN' YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW WHAT THIS BLOODY MEANS TO ME. NOW LET'S KNOCK THIS BOLLOCKS ON THE HEAD AN' GET DOWN TO BUSINESS, EH?
WE'VE GOT THE GO-AHEAD FROM RAYNER. YOUR BLOKE ALL BUT NAMED THE DATE FOR NINE-ELEVEN, BUT HE STILL HAD TO FALL ON HIS SWORD BECAUSE O' THE BRIDGE, DIDN'T HE?
WELL, THAT WAS DOWN TO THE SUPES. AN' NOW THAT MAEVE'S CONFIRMED IT, THE COMPANY'S WELL AN' TRULY OUT FOR BLOOD. WE'RE *SORTED*...
I'M NOT DIRECTOR RAYNER'S BIGGEST FAN, REMEMBER.
SHE'S AN EVIL FUCKIN' CUNT, BUT I FOR ONE BELIEVE SHE'LL BACK US.
LOOK, THE HOMELANDER'S HAD THEM HOLIDAY SNAPS FOR THREE YEARS NOW. HE KNOWS SOMEBODY'S ONTO HIM, HE'S GOTTA BE PARANOID AS FUCK--AN' THIS IS THE PERFECT TIME TO START TURNIN' THE SCREW.
I KNOW YOU HAVE EVERY REASON TO DESPISE THE HOMELANDER, BUT DON'T LET THAT BLIND YOU TO JUST HOW DANGEROUS HE IS. I'D BE A LOT MORE CONFIDENT IF I THOUGHT YOU WERE TAKING THIS MORE SERIOUSLY.
AND WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHO SENT THE C.I.A. THOSE PICTURES IN THE FIRST PLACE, DON'T FORGET.
WELL, I SAY WE WORRY ABOUT THAT ONE LATER...
REALLY.
AN' YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ME TAKIN' THIS SERIOUSLY, BELIEVE ME.
GOOD.
HMH.
D'YOU REMEMBER WHAT YOU SAID TO ME A COUPLE O' DAYS AGO?

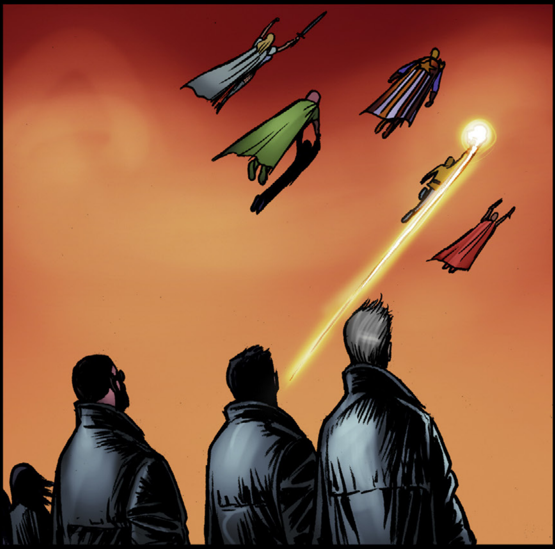

REGARDING...?
YOU WAS TALKIN' ABOUT ALL THE STUFF THAT'S HAPPENED SINCE LAST SEPTEMBER. THE PATRIOT ACT, AN' THE MEDIA STICKIN' THEIR TONGUES UP DAKOTA BOB'S ARSE, AN' EVERYONE BEIN' AFRAID TO HAVE A GO AT THE WHITE HOUSE.
YOU SAID... YOU SAID THERE ARE TIMES WHEN IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE AMERICA.
WELL, WHAT WE'RE TALKIN' ABOUT HERE IS THE DAY IT ALL WENT WRONG. THE DAY BLACK TURNED WHITE AN' UP TURNED DOWN.
LIKE THAT POOR FUCKIN' PILOT ON THE NORAD TAPE: "I BLEW A PLANELOAD OF AMERICANS OUT O' THE SKY, *IF WE LET THIS ONE THROUGH IT WAS FOR NOTHIN'.*"
AN' THEY DID...AN' IT WAS.
DON'T YOU WANNA MAKE SOMEONE ANSWER FOR ALL O' THAT?
SO HOW DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD GO ABOUT IT?
GET IN TOUCH WITH THE HOMELANDER. TELL HIM WE KNOW WHAT HAPPENED ON UNITED ONE SEVENTY-FIVE.
TELL HIM WE'RE THE PEOPLE SENT THE PHOTOS. WE THINK IT'S TIME TO TALK.
WE MEET THE SEVEN. WE LET 'EM GET A LOOK AT US. JUST SO THEY KNOW THERE'S SOMEONE WATCHIN'; THAT THIS MOB THE OTHER SUPES GO ON ABOUT ARE REAL.
WE TELL 'EM SOMEONE'S GETTIN' THROWN TO THE WOLVES FOR NINE-ELEVEN. WE DECIDE TOMORROW--
"OR YOU DECIDE TODAY."
AND YOU THINK THEY'LL CHOOSE THE *HOMELANDER*...?
THEY WILL ONCE THEY GET A LOAD O' THEM BLEEDIN' PHOTOS.

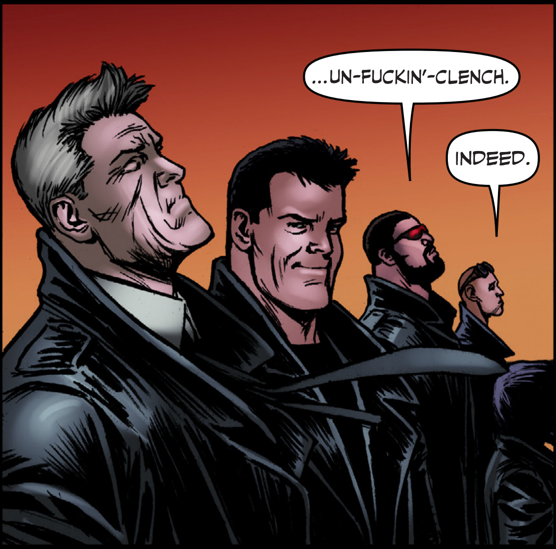

"IF YOU THINK I OR MOTHER'S MILK OR ANYBODY ELSE IS GOING TO BE AT GROUND ZERO WHEN HE REALIZES HE'S--"
"WELL NO, WE AIN'T GONNA DO IT LIKE THAT, ARE WE? I MEAN THE FIRST THING THEY'RE GONNA ASK IS WHY THEY SHOULDN'T JUST FILLET US THERE AN' THEN, AN' WE'RE GONNA SAY--ASK HIM."
"MEANING THE HOMELANDER."
"EX-ACTLY. AN' HE'S GONNA KNOW WHAT WE MEAN, SO HE'LL SHUT HIS TRAP ON THE SPOT.
"HE'LL TWIG WE'VE GOT COPIES O' THE PICS STRAIGHTAWAY--WHAT HE WON'T KNOW IS, WE'LL ALREADY'VE SENT A SET TO VOUGHT..."
"SO THEY GO HOME... CONFER WITH VOUGHT...AND A MUTUAL DECISION WILL BE MADE TO GIVE HIM UP?"
"BY WHICH STAGE WE'LL BE MILES AWAY."
"AND IF HE BUCKS?"
"THAT AIN'T OUR PROBLEM."

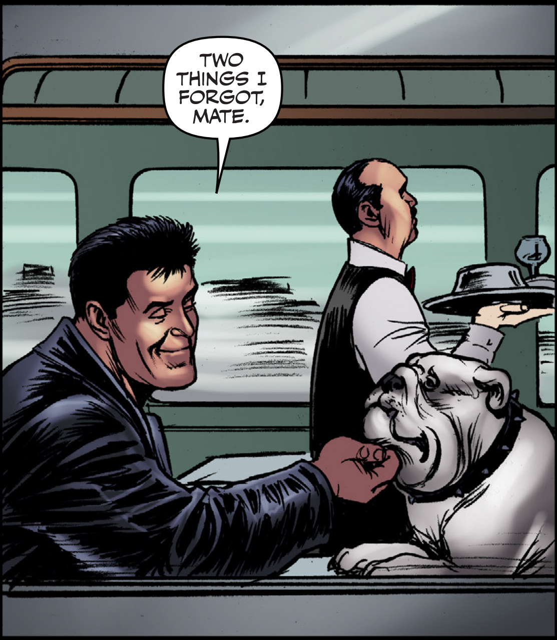

"BUT I DOUBT HE WILL. THINK ABOUT THE CHOICE THEY'LL GIVE HIM WHEN IT COMES TO GOIN' PUBLIC: YOU EITHER BOLLOCKSED UP A SOLO EFFORT TO STOP THAT PLANE GETTIN' THROUGH, 'COS YOU'RE A WELL-INTENTIONED DICKHEAD WHO WAS OUT OF HIS DEPTH--
"OR YOU'RE A FULL-ON MANIAC WHO FUCKED A BABY IN HALF. AN' HERE'S A COUPLE O' VISUAL AIDS TO PROVE IT."
"AND THEN...?"
"AN' THEN THEY PUT HIM OUT TO PASTURE. WHO KNOWS, MAYBE WHOEVER CALLED THE FIGHTERS OFF GETS NERVOUS, AN' VOUGHT HAVE TO PULL THE PLUG COMPLETELY--I DOUBT THEY'VE GOT A CUNT LIKE THAT WALKIN' AROUND WITHOUT A WAY TO DROP HIM IF IT COMES TO IT.
"AN' EVEN IF THEY DON'T...I'LL FIND ONE SOONER OR LATER."
"DON'T FORGET THAT IF THEY DECIDE TO TAKE THE MEETING AT ALL, THEY'LL BE BRIEFED BY VOUGHT BEFOREHAND. VERY THOROUGHLY INDEED, I WOULD IMAGINE.
"AND THEN THERE'S...WELL, THERE'S THE WILD CARD NO ONE EVER FORESEES. THIS MIGHT NOT GO THE WAY YOU'RE SCRIPTING IT AT ALL."
WHEN DOES IT?
I JUST...
HHHH.
OKAY.

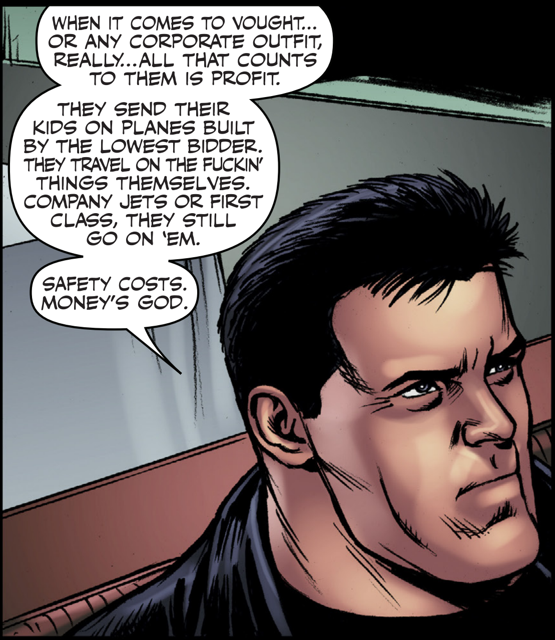

IS THAT IT?
IT IS.
THEN WE'RE GOING TO LEAVE NOW.
YOU'LL KNOW OUR DECISION SOON ENOUGH.
WAIT A MINUTE, WHAT THE FUCK *IS THIS*--?
WHO ARE THESE PRICKS? WHY DO THEY THINK THEY CAN TREAT US LIKE THIS? AND WHAT DID THAT MEAN, THAT SHIT ABOUT ASKING YOU?
LAMPLIGHTER, LET'S JUST--
FUCK THAT SHIT!
I GOT MY FUCKING RIBS CAVED IN THAT DAY! I NEARLY DIED UP THERE, TRYING TO STOP THAT GODDAMNED PLANE! AND YOU'RE TELLING ME THESE NOBODIES, THESE FUCKING COCKSUCKING NOBODIES--THEY GET TO USE **THAT** *TO FUCK WITH* **US?!**
YOU SHOULD CONTROL THIS MAN.
WHAT...?

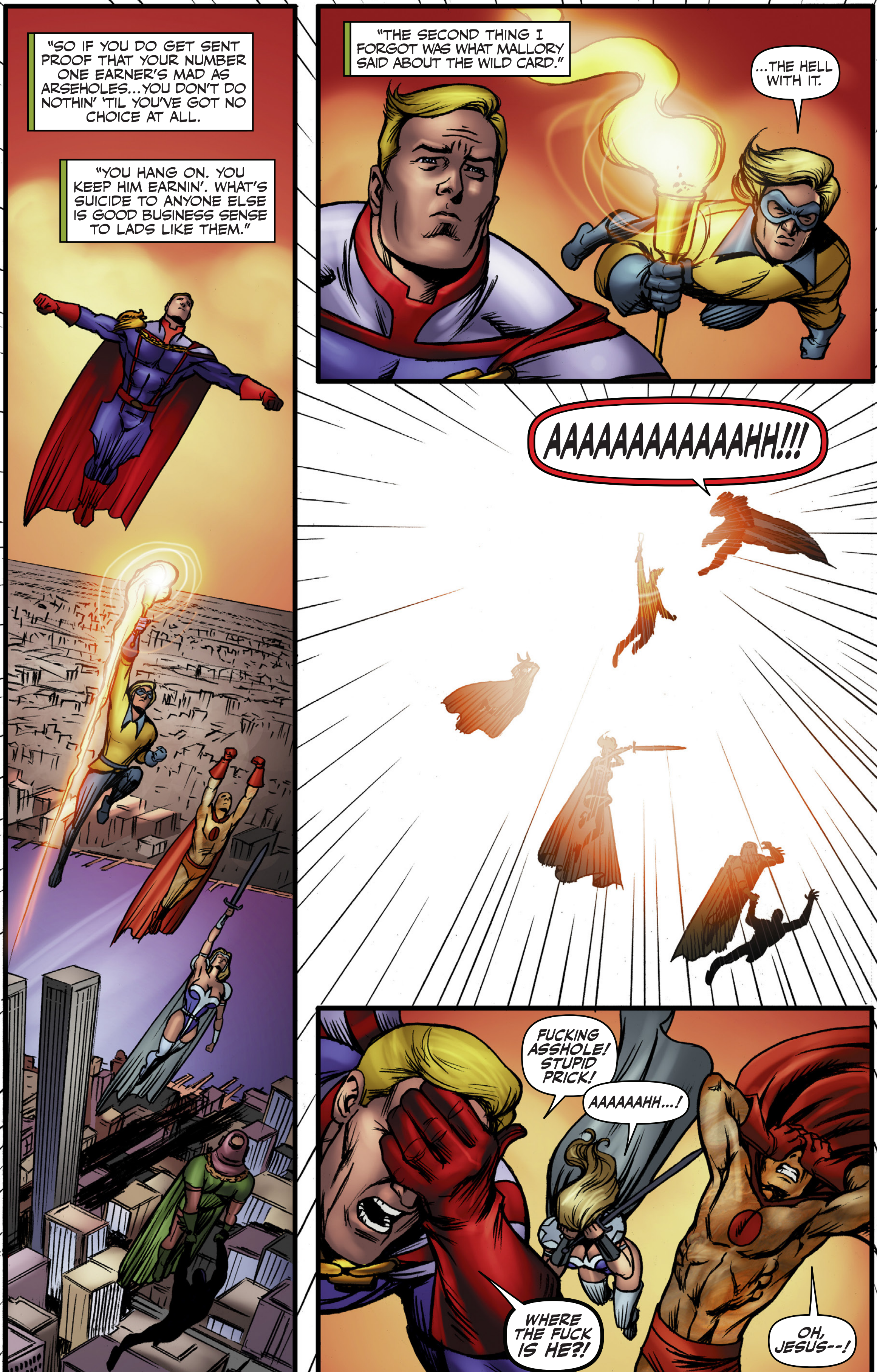


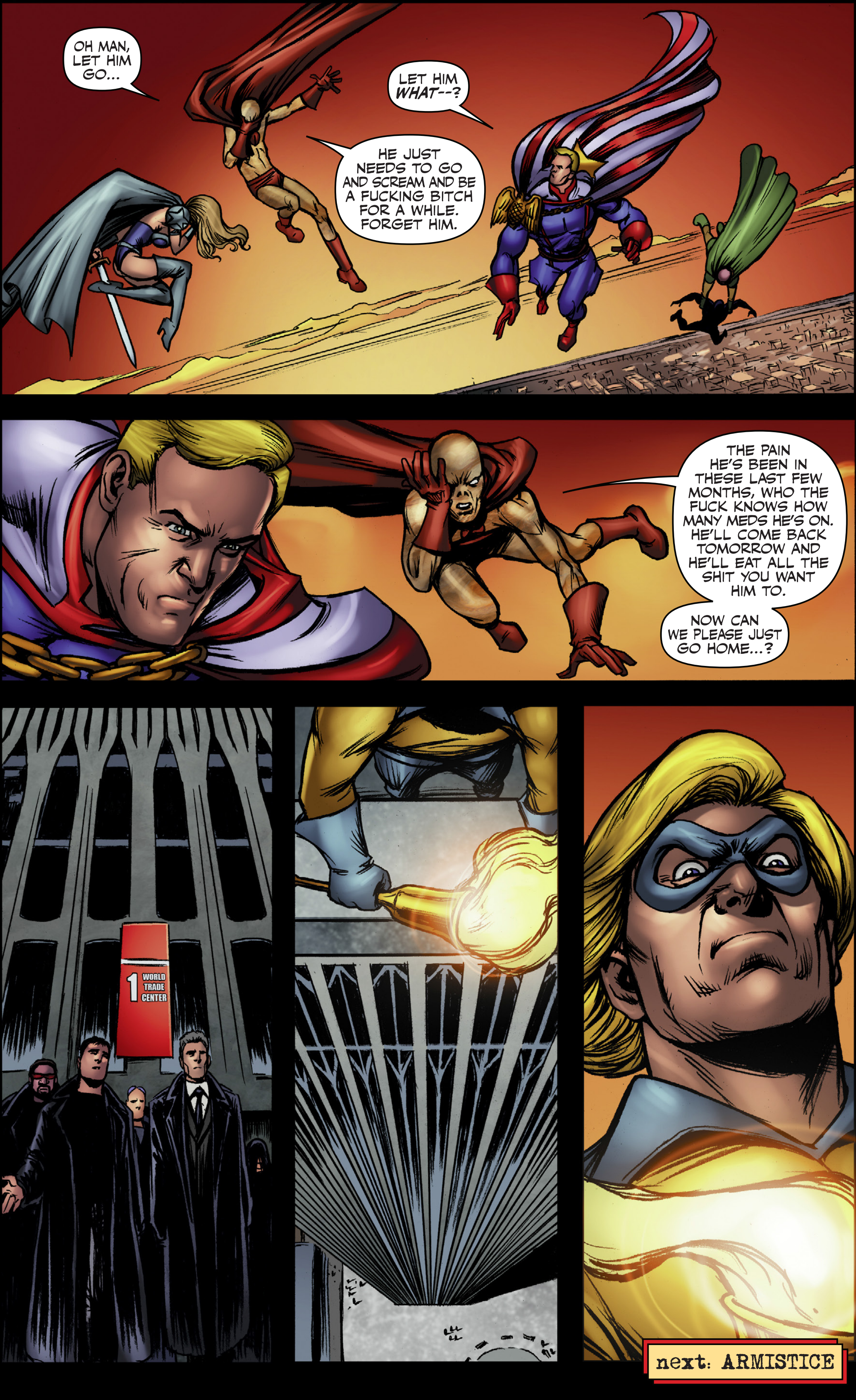



...UN-FUCKIN'-CLENCH.
INDEED.


TWO THINGS I FORGOT, MATE.


WHEN IT COMES TO VOUGHT... OR ANY CORPORATE OUTFIT, REALLY...ALL THAT COUNTS TO THEM IS PROFIT.
THEY SEND THEIR KIDS ON PLANES BUILT BY THE LOWEST BIDDER. THEY TRAVEL ON THE FUCKIN' THINGS THEMSELVES. COMPANY JETS OR FIRST CLASS, THEY STILL GO ON 'EM.
SAFETY COSTS. MONEY'S GOD.


"SO IF YOU DO GET SENT PROOF THAT YOUR NUMBER ONE EARNER'S MAD AS ARSEHOLES...YOU DON'T DO NOTHIN' 'TIL YOU'VE GOT NO CHOICE AT ALL.
"YOU HANG ON. YOU KEEP HIM EARNIN'. WHAT'S SUICIDE TO ANYONE ELSE IS GOOD BUSINESS SENSE TO LADS LIKE THEM."
"THE SECOND THING I FORGOT WAS WHAT MALLORY SAID ABOUT THE WILD CARD."
...THE HELL WITH IT.
AAAAAAAAAAAAAHH!!!
FUCKING ASSHOLE! STUPID PRICK!
AAAAAAHH...!
WHERE THE FUCK IS HE?!
OH, JESUS--!


OH MAN, LET HIM GO...
LET HIM *WHAT--?*
HE JUST NEEDS TO GO AND SCREAM AND BE A FUCKING BITCH FOR A WHILE. FORGET HIM.
THE PAIN HE'S BEEN IN THESE LAST FEW MONTHS, WHO THE FUCK KNOWS HOW MANY MEDS HE'S ON. HE'LL COME BACK TOMORROW AND HE'LL EAT ALL THE SHIT YOU WANT HIM TO.
NOW CAN WE PLEASE JUST GO HOME...?
1 WORLD TRADE CENTER
next: ARMISTICE

FIFTY
DA
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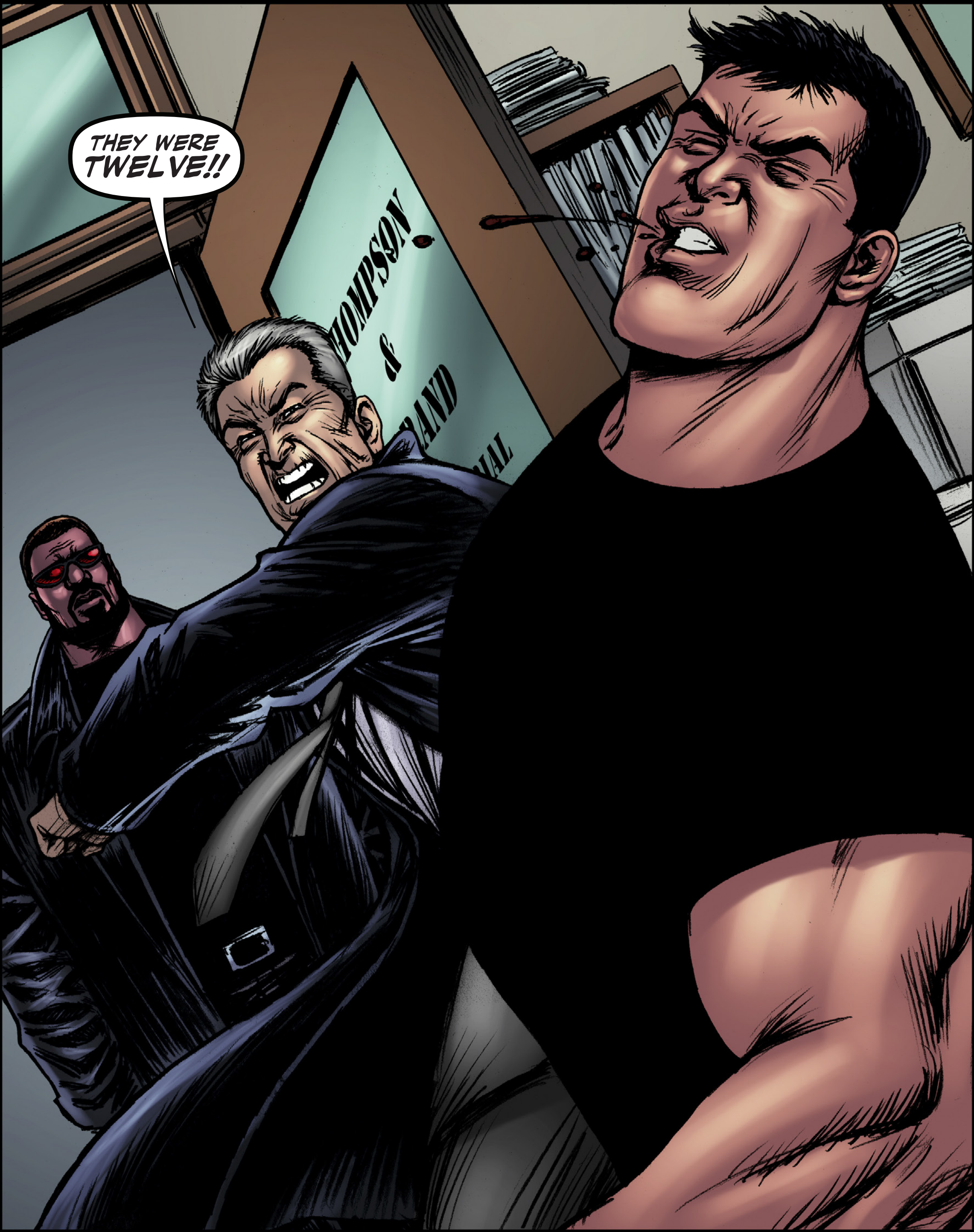
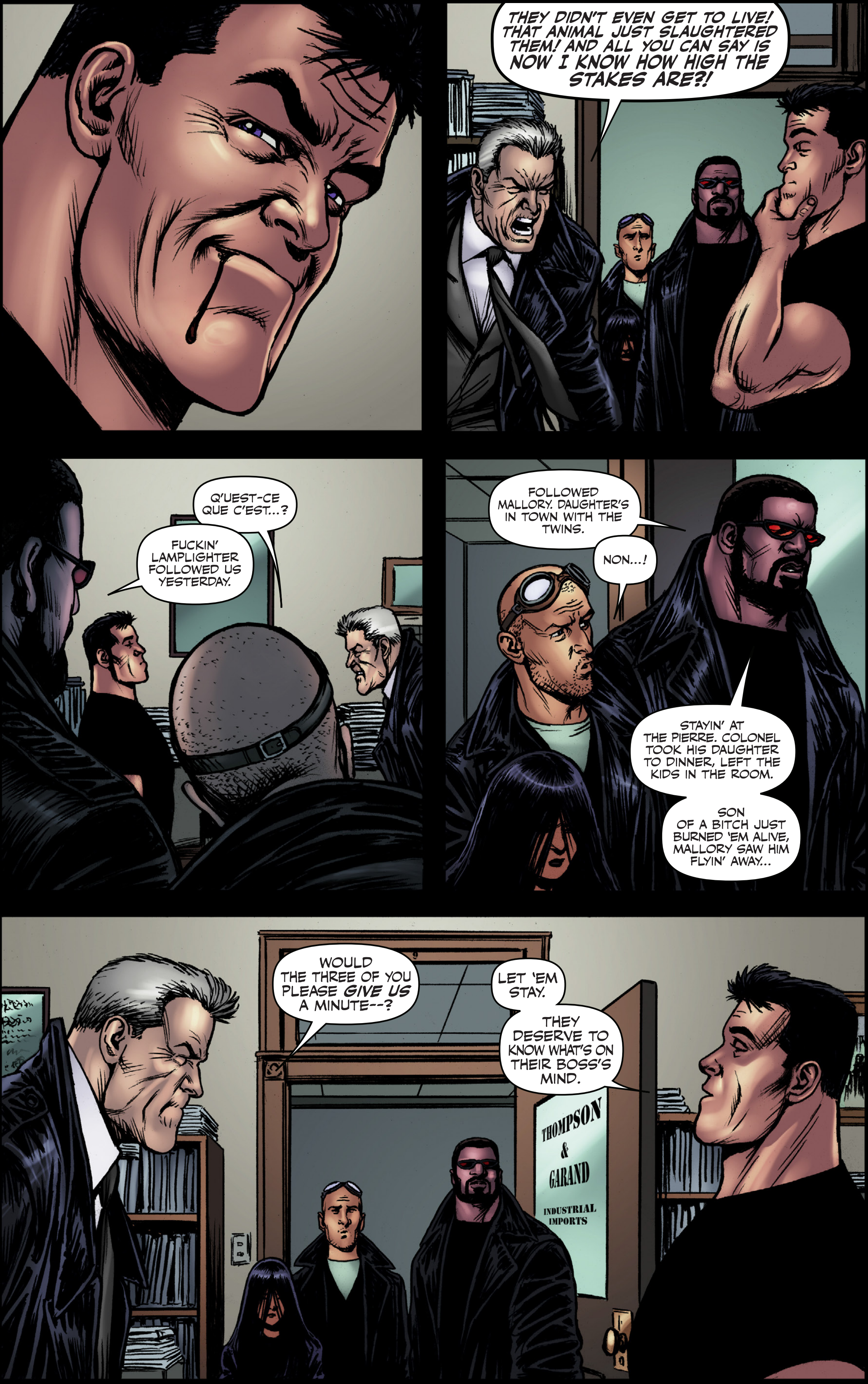
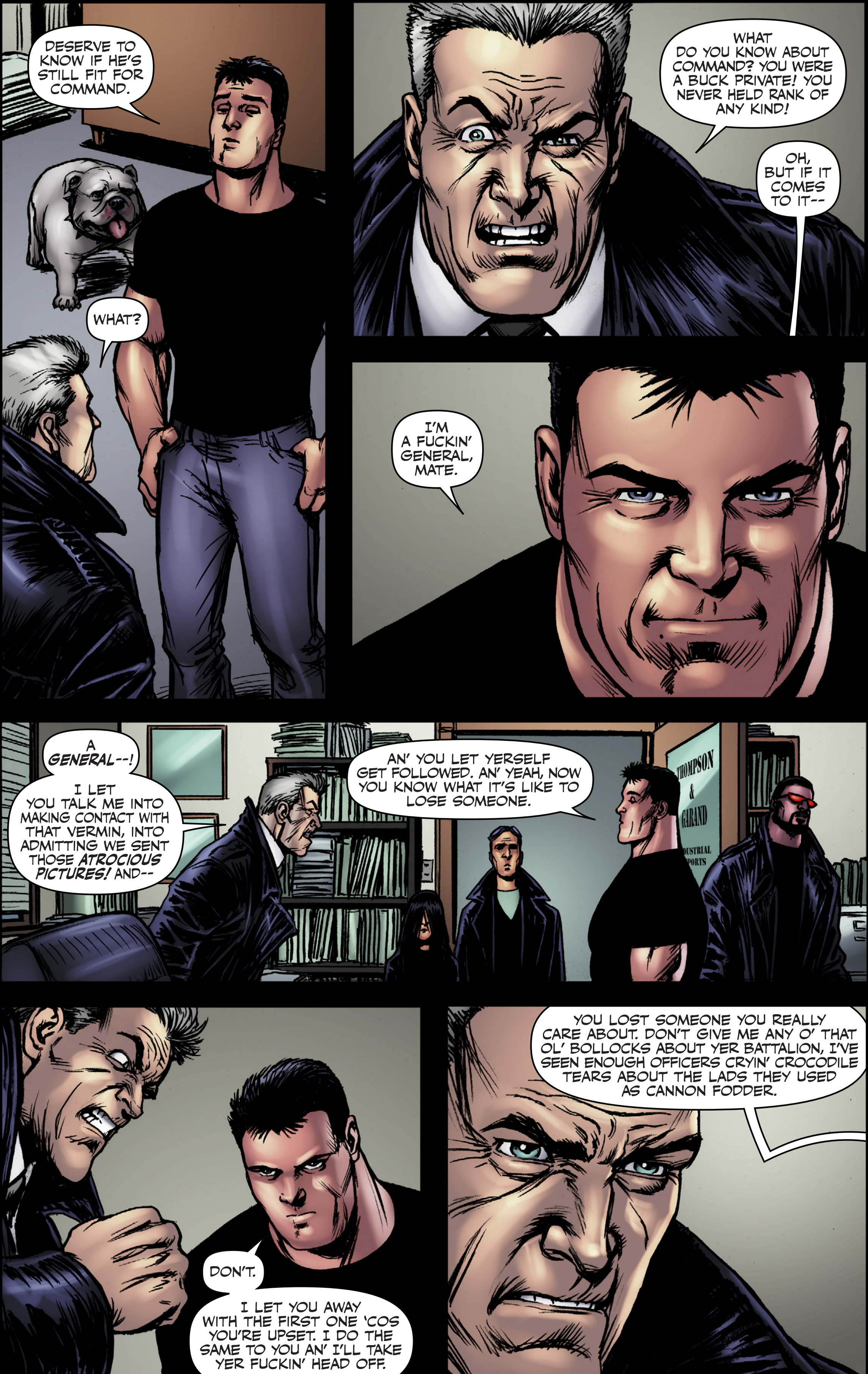
CK
2010

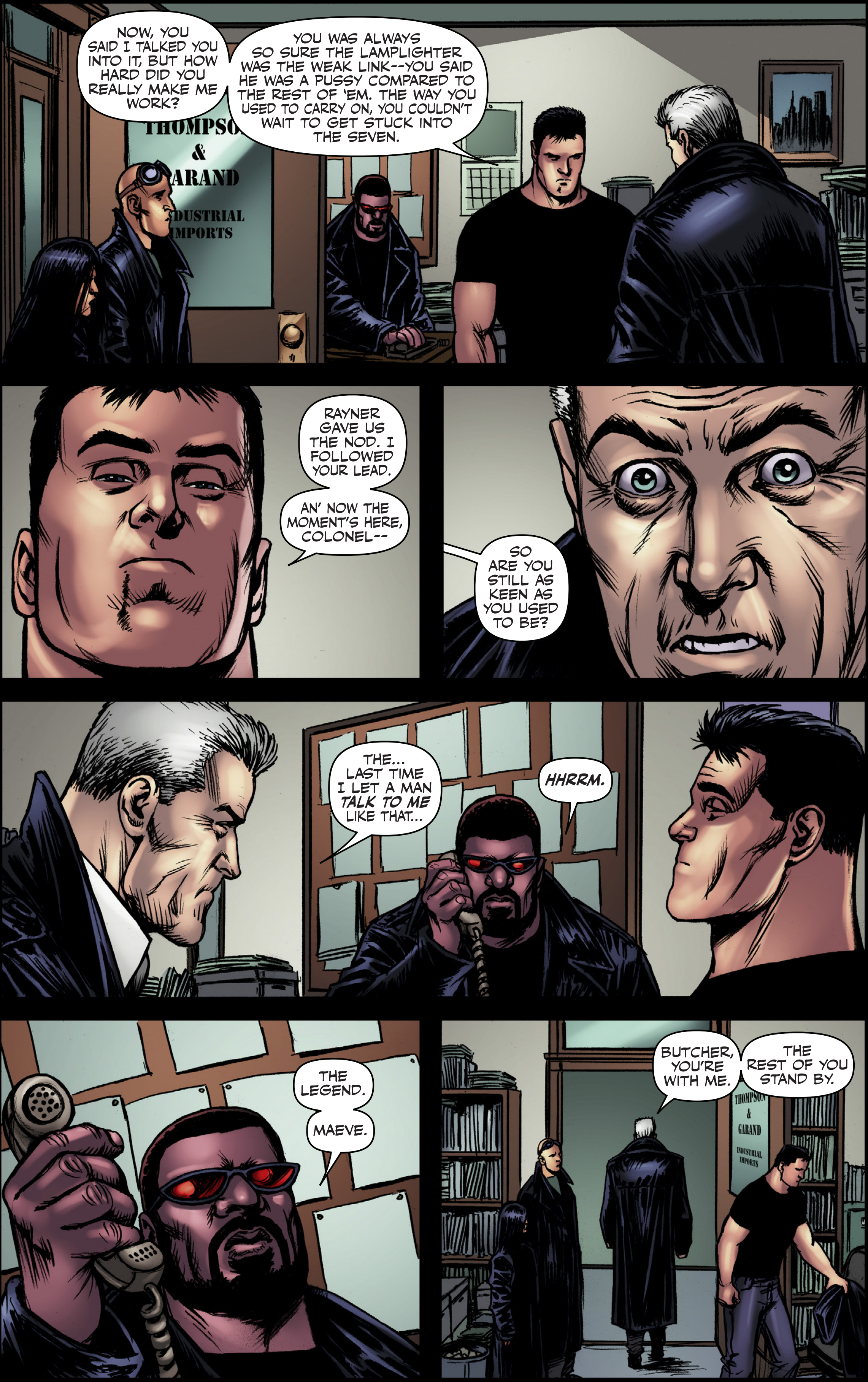

THEY WERE TWELVE!!
HOMPSON
&
RAND
NAL

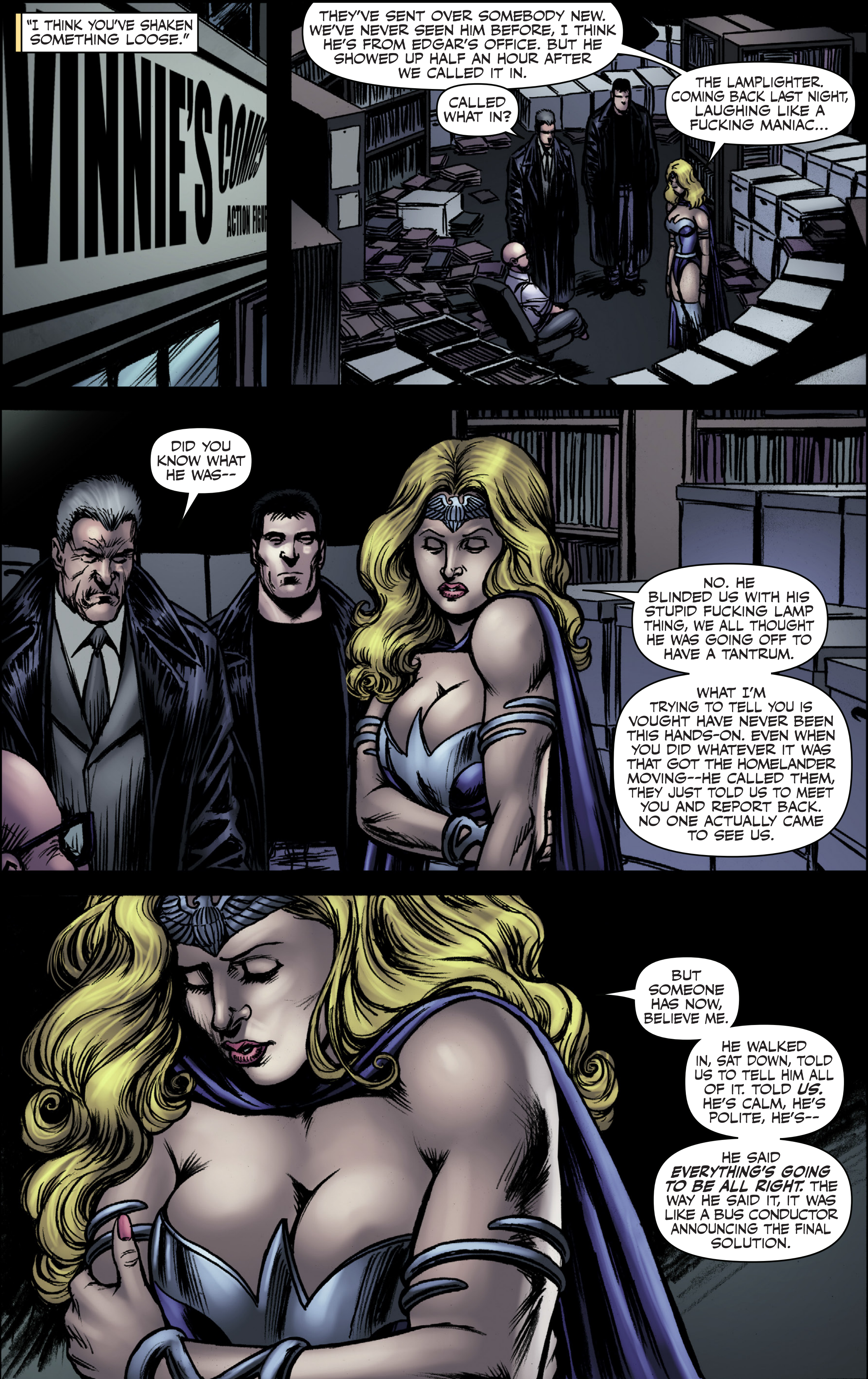
PROPER PREPARATION AND PLANNING

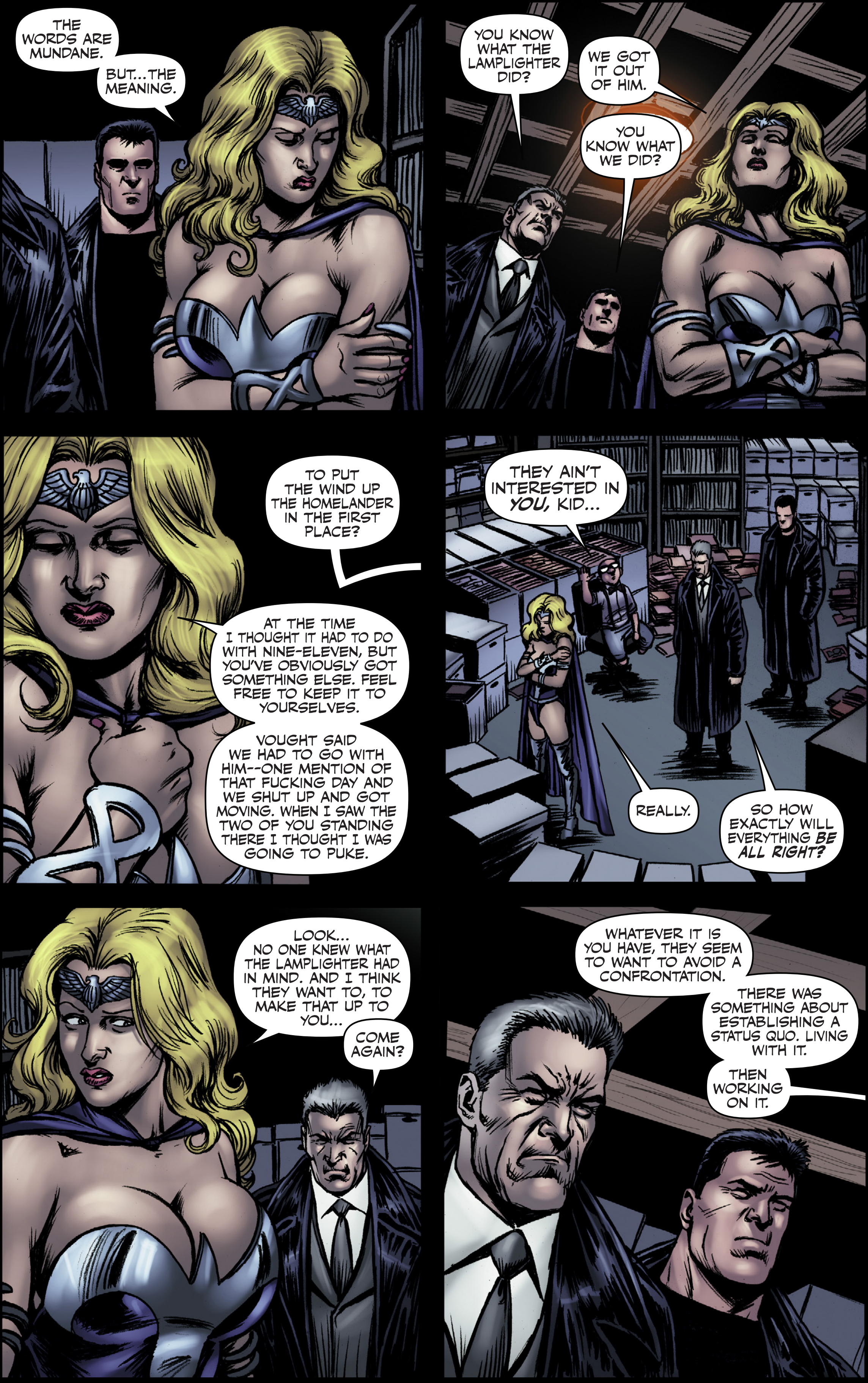
part three

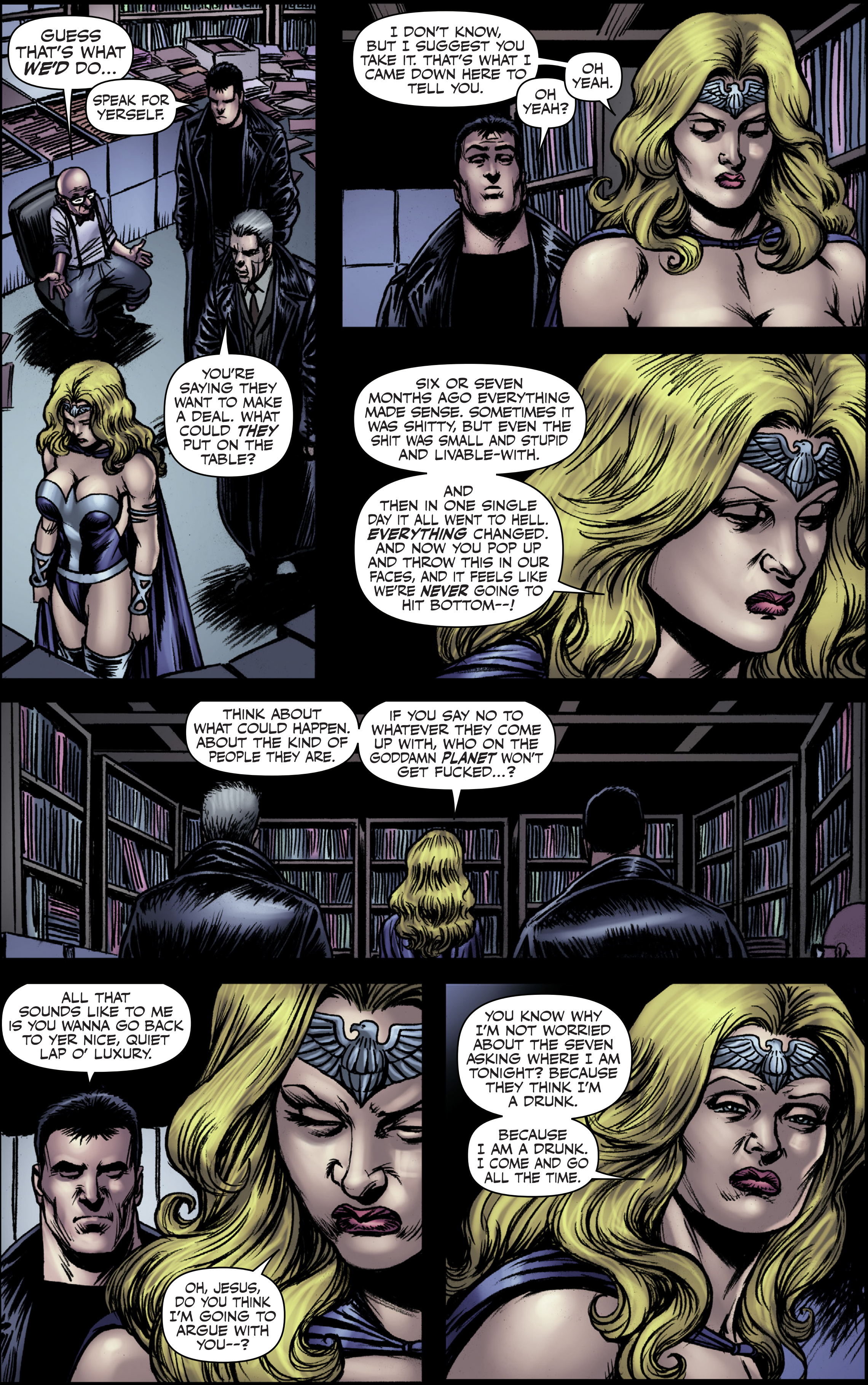

THEY DIDN'T EVEN GET TO LIVE! THAT ANIMAL JUST SLAUGHTERED THEM! AND ALL YOU CAN SAY IS NOW I KNOW HOW HIGH THE STAKES ARE?!
Q'UEST-CE QUE C'EST...?
FUCKIN' LAMPLIGHTER FOLLOWED US YESTERDAY.
FOLLOWED MALLORY. DAUGHTER'S IN TOWN WITH THE TWINS.
NON...!
STAYIN' AT THE PIERRE. COLONEL TOOK HIS DAUGHTER TO DINNER, LEFT THE KIDS IN THE ROOM.
SON OF A BITCH JUST BURNED 'EM ALIVE, MALLORY SAW HIM FLYIN' AWAY...
WOULD THE THREE OF YOU PLEASE GIVE US A MINUTE--?
LET 'EM STAY.
THEY DESERVE TO KNOW WHAT'S ON THEIR BOSS'S MIND.
THOMPSON & GARAND INDUSTRIAL IMPORTS

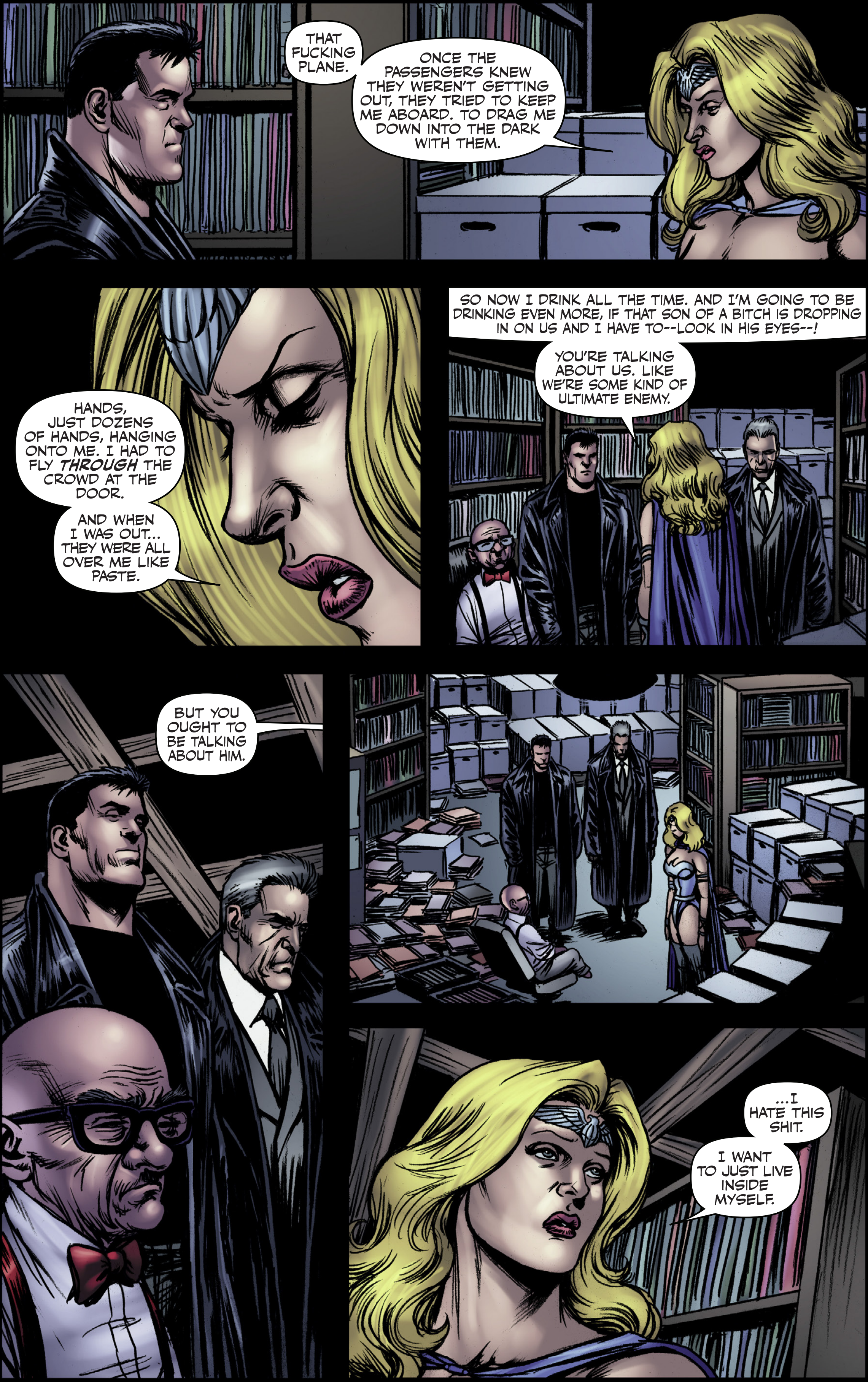

DESERVE TO KNOW IF HE'S STILL FIT FOR COMMAND.
WHAT?
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT COMMAND? YOU WERE A BUCK PRIVATE! YOU NEVER HELD RANK OF ANY KIND!
OH, BUT IF IT COMES TO IT--
I'M A FUCKIN' GENERAL, MATE.
A *GENERAL*--!
I LET YOU TALK ME INTO MAKING CONTACT WITH THAT VERMIN, INTO ADMITTING WE SENT THOSE *ATROCIOUS PICTURES!* AND--
AN' YOU LET YERSELF GET FOLLOWED. AN' YEAH, NOW YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO LOSE SOMEONE.
THOMPSON & GARAND INDUSTRIAL REPORTS
DON'T.
I LET YOU AWAY WITH THE FIRST ONE 'COS YOU'RE UPSET. I DO THE SAME TO YOU AN' I'LL TAKE YER FUCKIN' HEAD OFF.
YOU LOST SOMEONE YOU REALLY CARE ABOUT. DON'T GIVE ME ANY O' THAT OL' BOLLOCKS ABOUT YER BATTALION, I'VE SEEN ENOUGH OFFICERS CRYIN' CROCODILE TEARS ABOUT THE LADS THEY USED AS CANNON FODDER.

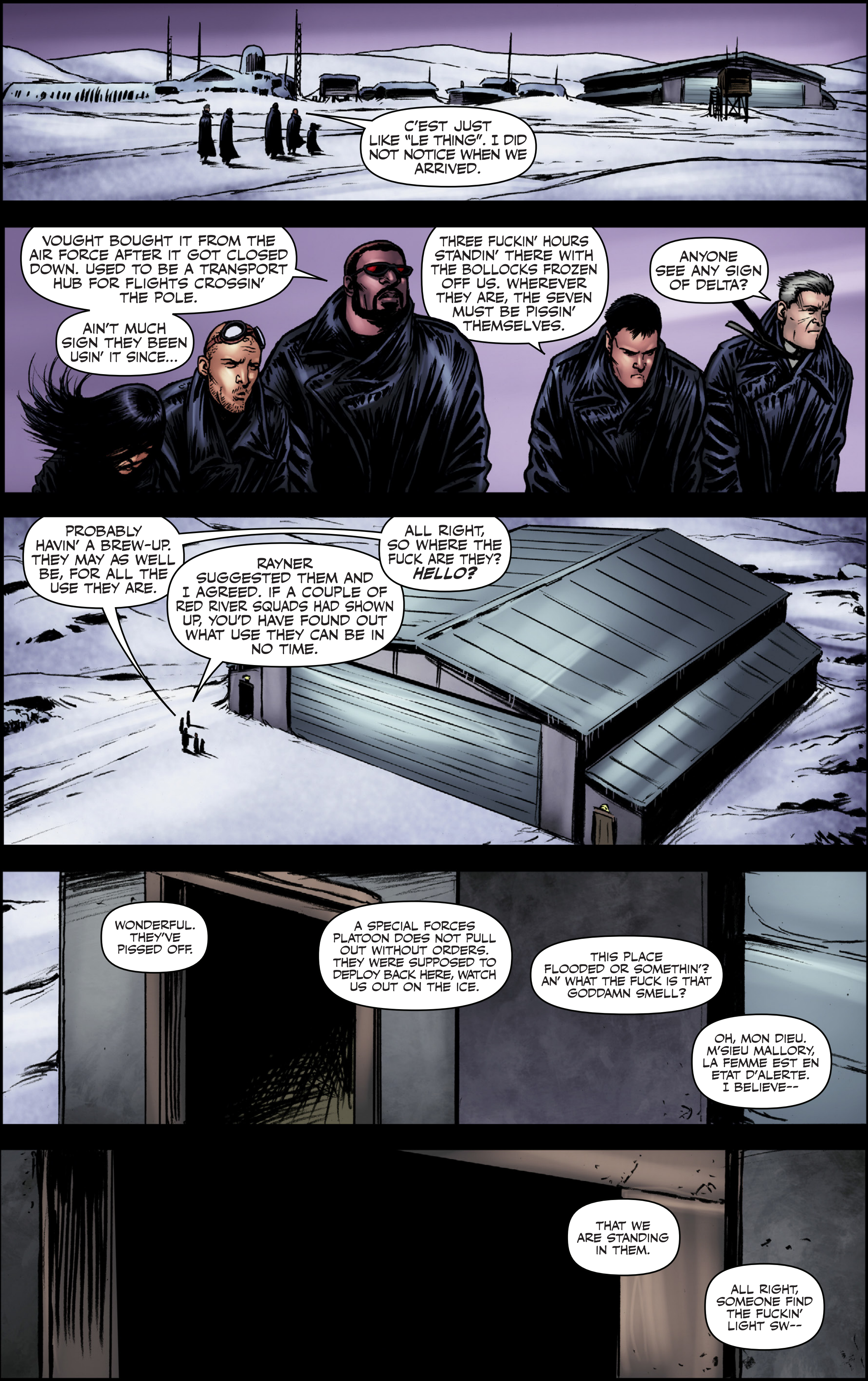

NOW, YOU SAID I TALKED YOU INTO IT, BUT HOW HARD DID YOU REALLY MAKE ME WORK?
YOU WAS ALWAYS SO SURE THE LAMPLIGHTER WAS THE WEAK LINK--YOU SAID HE WAS A PUSSY COMPARED TO THE REST OF 'EM. THE WAY YOU USED TO CARRY ON, YOU COULDN'T WAIT TO GET STUCK INTO THE SEVEN.
THOMPSO
&
ARAND
DUSTRIAL
IMPORTS
RAYNER GAVE US THE NOD. I FOLLOWED YOUR LEAD.
AN' NOW THE MOMENT'S HERE, COLONEL--
SO ARE YOU STILL AS KEEN AS YOU USED TO BE?
THE... LAST TIME I LET A MAN *TALK TO ME* LIKE THAT...
HHRRM.
THE LEGEND.
MAEVE.
BUTCHER, YOU'RE WITH ME.
THE REST OF YOU STAND BY.
THOMPSON
&
GARAND
INDUSTRIAL
IMPORTS

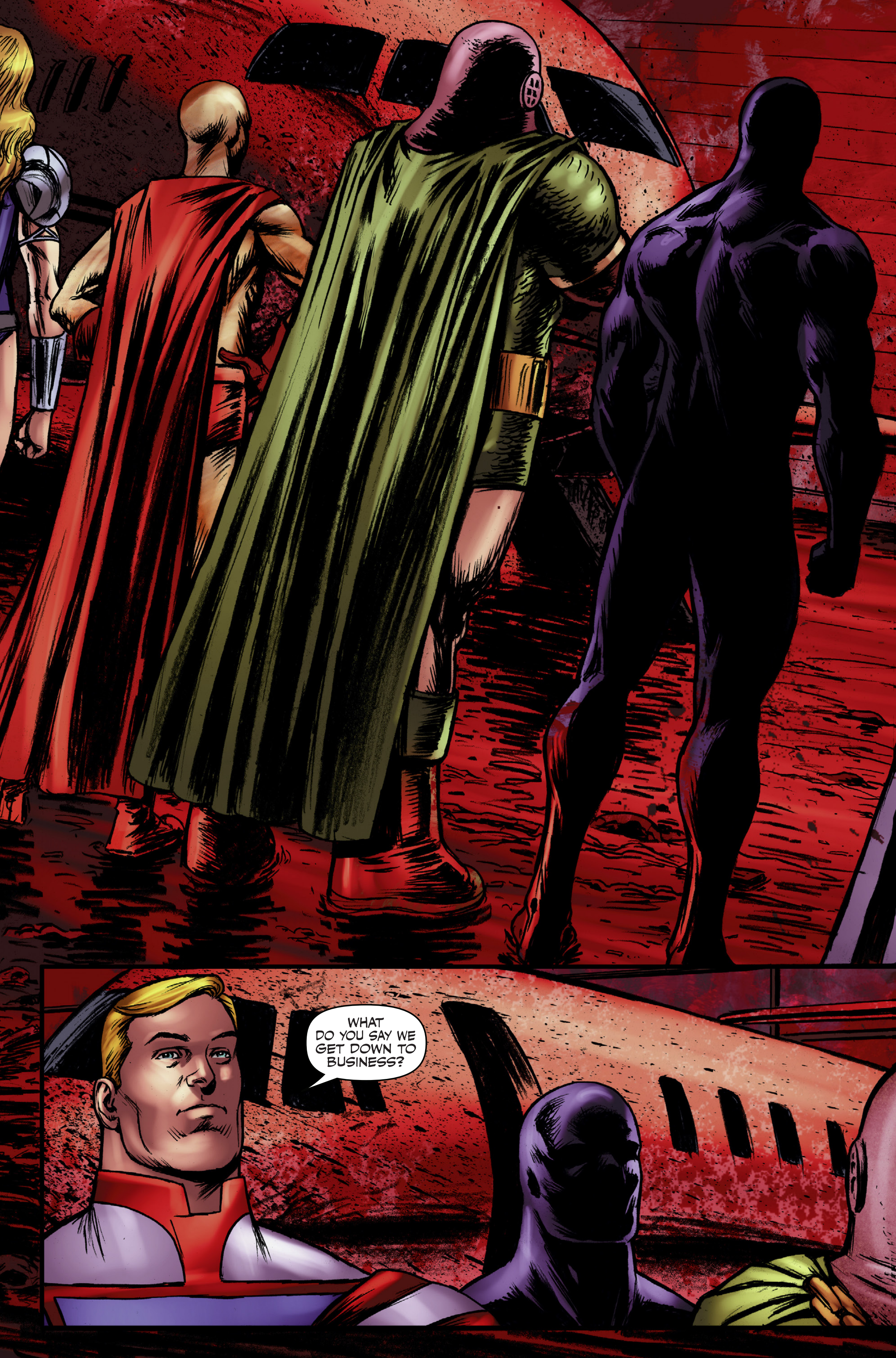

"I THINK YOU'VE SHAKEN SOMETHING LOOSE."
VINNIE'S COMIC
ACTION FIGUR
THEY'VE SENT OVER SOMEBODY NEW. WE'VE NEVER SEEN HIM BEFORE, I THINK HE'S FROM EDGAR'S OFFICE. BUT HE SHOWED UP HALF AN HOUR AFTER WE CALLED IT IN.
CALLED WHAT IN?
THE LAMPLIGHTER. COMING BACK LAST NIGHT, LAUGHING LIKE A FUCKING MANIAC...
DID YOU KNOW WHAT HE WAS--
NO. HE BLINDED US WITH HIS STUPID FUCKING LAMP THING, WE ALL THOUGHT HE WAS GOING OFF TO HAVE A TANTRUM.
WHAT I'M TRYING TO TELL YOU IS VOUGHT HAVE NEVER BEEN THIS HANDS-ON. EVEN WHEN YOU DID WHATEVER IT WAS THAT GOT THE HOMELANDER MOVING--HE CALLED THEM, THEY JUST TOLD US TO MEET YOU AND REPORT BACK. NO ONE ACTUALLY CAME TO SEE US.
BUT SOMEONE HAS NOW, BELIEVE ME.
HE WALKED IN, SAT DOWN, TOLD US TO TELL HIM ALL OF IT. TOLD *US.* HE'S CALM, HE'S POLITE, HE'S--
HE SAID ***EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.*** THE WAY HE SAID IT, IT WAS LIKE A BUS CONDUCTOR ANNOUNCING THE FINAL SOLUTION.

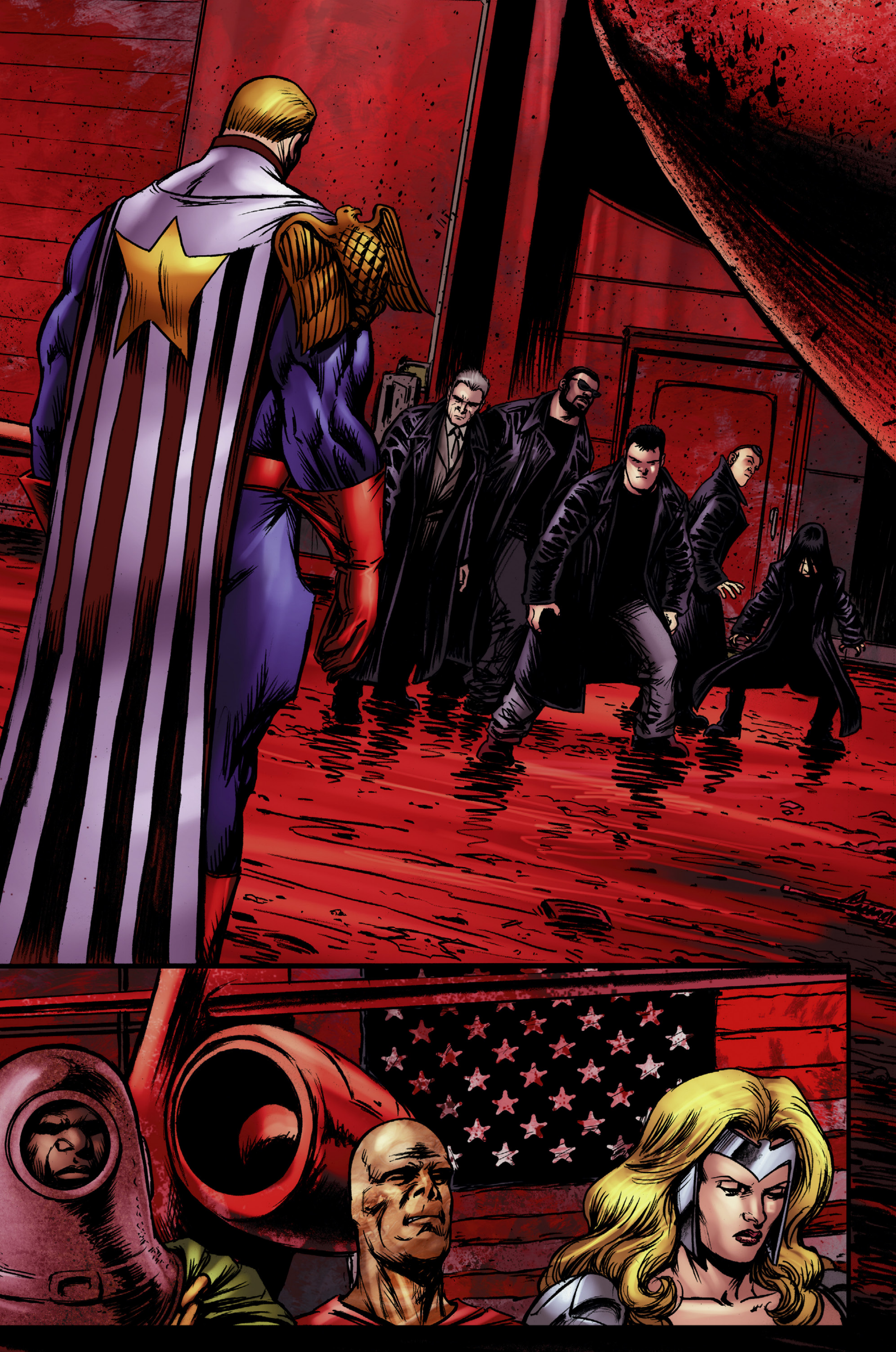

THE WORDS ARE MUNDANE.
BUT...THE MEANING.
YOU KNOW WHAT THE LAMPLIGHTER DID?
WE GOT IT OUT OF HIM.
YOU KNOW WHAT WE DID?
TO PUT THE WIND UP THE HOMELANDER IN THE FIRST PLACE?
AT THE TIME I THOUGHT IT HAD TO DO WITH NINE-ELEVEN, BUT YOU'VE OBVIOUSLY GOT SOMETHING ELSE. FEEL FREE TO KEEP IT TO YOURSELVES.
VOUGHT SAID WE HAD TO GO WITH HIM--ONE MENTION OF THAT FUCKING DAY AND WE SHUT UP AND GOT MOVING. WHEN I SAW THE TWO OF YOU STANDING THERE I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO PUKE.
THEY AIN'T INTERESTED IN *YOU,* KID...
REALLY.
SO HOW EXACTLY WILL EVERYTHING *BE ALL RIGHT?*
LOOK... NO ONE KNEW WHAT THE LAMPLIGHTER HAD IN MIND. AND I THINK THEY WANT TO, TO MAKE THAT UP TO YOU...
COME AGAIN?
WHATEVER IT IS YOU HAVE, THEY SEEM TO WANT TO AVOID A CONFRONTATION.
THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT ESTABLISHING A STATUS QUO. LIVING WITH IT.
THEN WORKING ON IT.

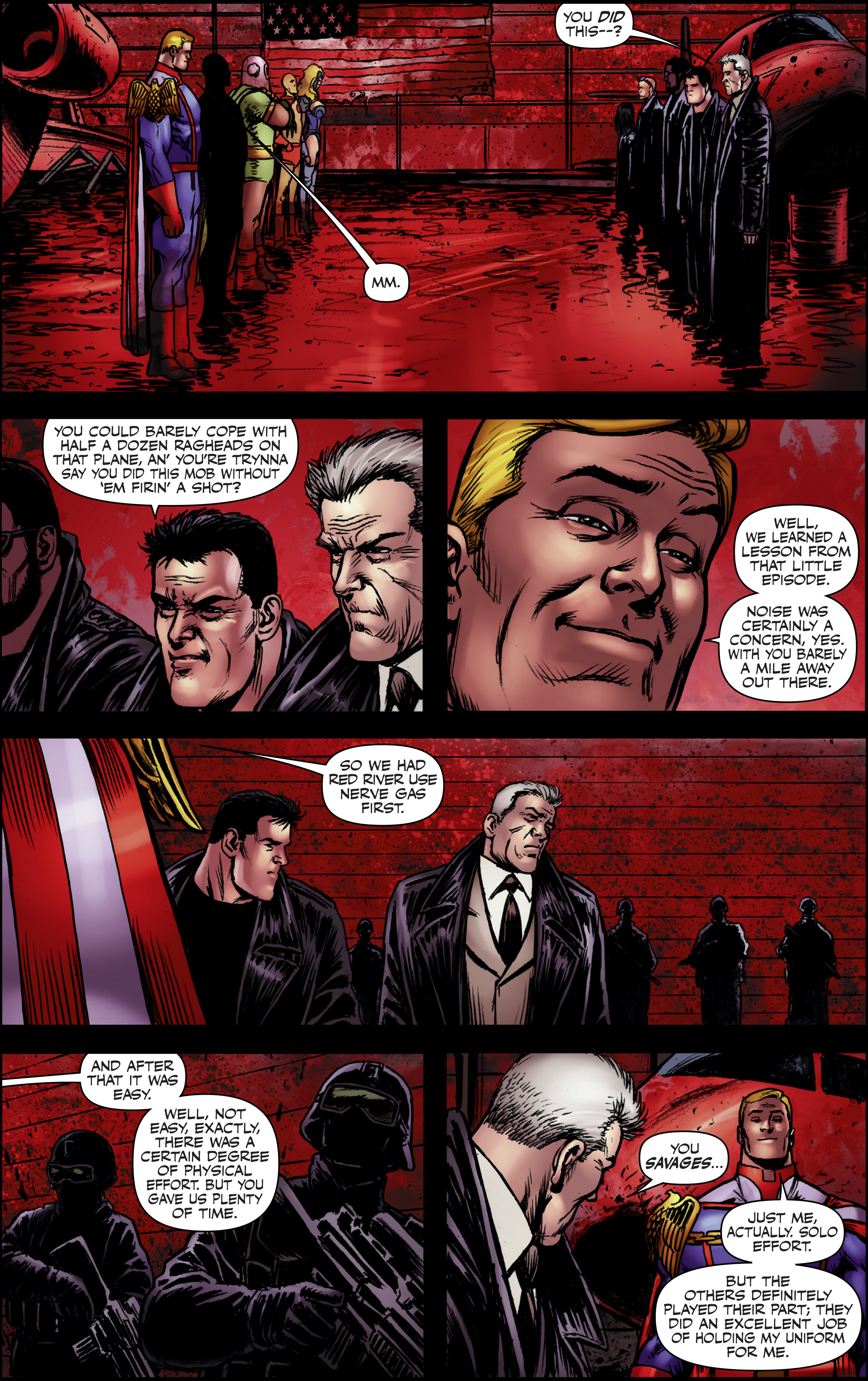

GUESS THAT'S WHAT *WE'D* DO...
SPEAK FOR YERSELF.
YOU'RE SAYING THEY WANT TO MAKE A DEAL. WHAT COULD *THEY* PUT ON THE TABLE?
I DON'T KNOW, BUT I SUGGEST YOU TAKE IT. THAT'S WHAT I CAME DOWN HERE TO TELL YOU.
OH YEAH?
OH YEAH.
SIX OR SEVEN MONTHS AGO EVERYTHING MADE SENSE. SOMETIMES IT WAS SHITTY, BUT EVEN THE SHIT WAS SMALL AND STUPID AND LIVABLE-WITH.
AND THEN IN ONE SINGLE DAY IT ALL WENT TO HELL. ***EVERYTHING*** CHANGED. AND NOW YOU POP UP AND THROW THIS IN OUR FACES, AND IT FEELS LIKE WE'RE ***NEVER*** GOING TO HIT BOTTOM--!
THINK ABOUT WHAT COULD HAPPEN. ABOUT THE KIND OF PEOPLE THEY ARE.
IF YOU SAY NO TO WHATEVER THEY COME UP WITH, WHO ON THE GODDAMN *PLANET* WON'T GET FUCKED...?
ALL THAT SOUNDS LIKE TO ME IS YOU WANNA GO BACK TO YER NICE, QUIET LAP O' LUXURY.
OH, JESUS, DO YOU THINK I'M GOING TO ARGUE WITH YOU--?
YOU KNOW WHY I'M NOT WORRIED ABOUT THE SEVEN ASKING WHERE I AM TONIGHT? BECAUSE THEY THINK I'M A DRUNK.
BECAUSE I AM A DRUNK. I COME AND GO ALL THE TIME.

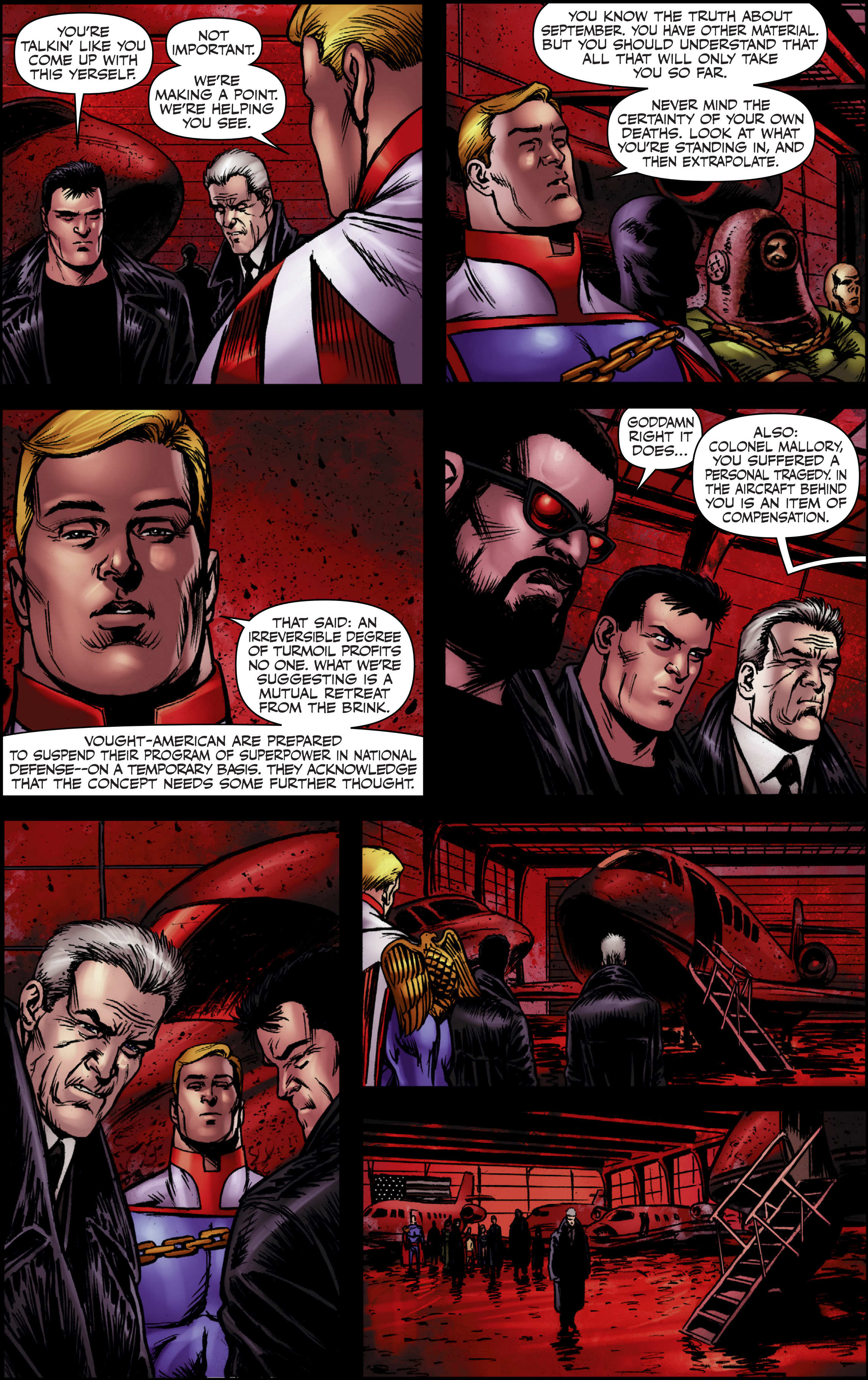

THAT FUCKING PLANE.
ONCE THE PASSENGERS KNEW THEY WEREN'T GETTING OUT, THEY TRIED TO KEEP ME ABOARD. TO DRAG ME DOWN INTO THE DARK WITH THEM.
HANDS, JUST DOZENS OF HANDS, HANGING ONTO ME. I HAD TO FLY *THROUGH* THE CROWD AT THE DOOR.
AND WHEN I WAS OUT... THEY WERE ALL OVER ME LIKE PASTE.
SO NOW I DRINK ALL THE TIME. AND I'M GOING TO BE DRINKING EVEN MORE, IF THAT SON OF A BITCH IS DROPPING IN ON US AND I HAVE TO--LOOK IN HIS EYES--!
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT US. LIKE WE'RE SOME KIND OF ULTIMATE ENEMY.
BUT YOU OUGHT TO BE TALKING ABOUT HIM.
...I HATE THIS SHIT.
I WANT TO JUST LIVE INSIDE MYSELF.

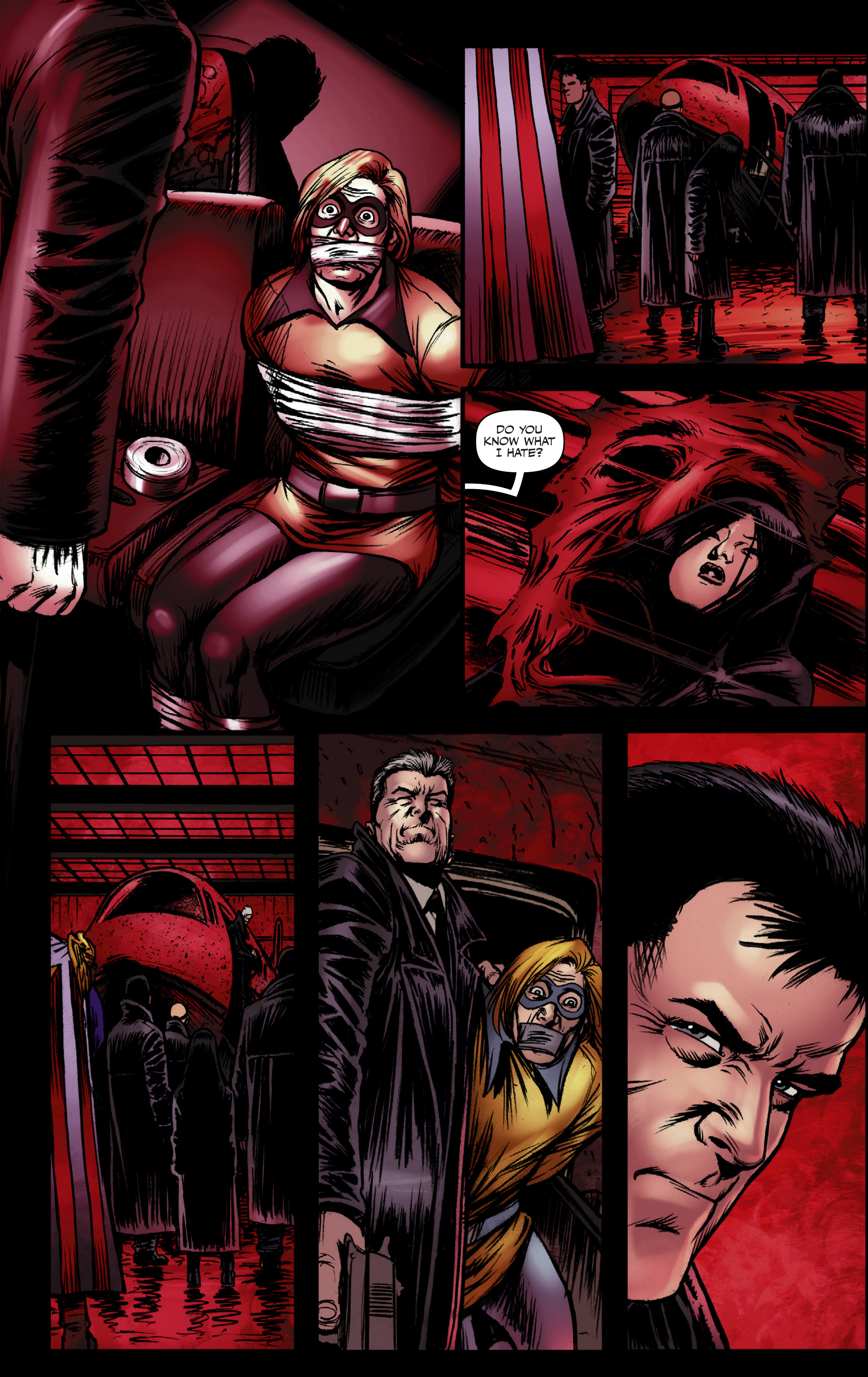

C'EST JUST LIKE "LE THING". I DID NOT NOTICE WHEN WE ARRIVED.
VOUGHT BOUGHT IT FROM THE AIR FORCE AFTER IT GOT CLOSED DOWN. USED TO BE A TRANSPORT HUB FOR FLIGHTS CROSSIN' THE POLE.
AIN'T MUCH SIGN THEY BEEN USIN' IT SINCE...
THREE FUCKIN' HOURS STANDIN' THERE WITH THE BOLLOCKS FROZEN OFF US. WHEREVER THEY ARE, THE SEVEN MUST BE PISSIN' THEMSELVES.
ANYONE SEE ANY SIGN OF DELTA?
PROBABLY HAVIN' A BREW-UP. THEY MAY AS WELL BE, FOR ALL THE USE THEY ARE.
ALL RIGHT, SO WHERE THE FUCK ARE THEY? *HELLO?*
RAYNER SUGGESTED THEM AND I AGREED. IF A COUPLE OF RED RIVER SQUADS HAD SHOWN UP, YOU'D HAVE FOUND OUT WHAT USE THEY CAN BE IN NO TIME.
WONDERFUL. THEY'VE PISSED OFF.
A SPECIAL FORCES PLATOON DOES NOT PULL OUT WITHOUT ORDERS. THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO DEPLOY BACK HERE, WATCH US OUT ON THE ICE.
THIS PLACE FLOODED OR SOMETHIN'? AN' WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT GODDAMN SMELL?
OH, MON DIEU. M'SIEU MALLORY, LA FEMME EST EN ETAT D'ALERTE. I BELIEVE--
THAT WE ARE STANDING IN THEM.
ALL RIGHT, SOMEONE FIND THE FUCKIN' LIGHT SW--

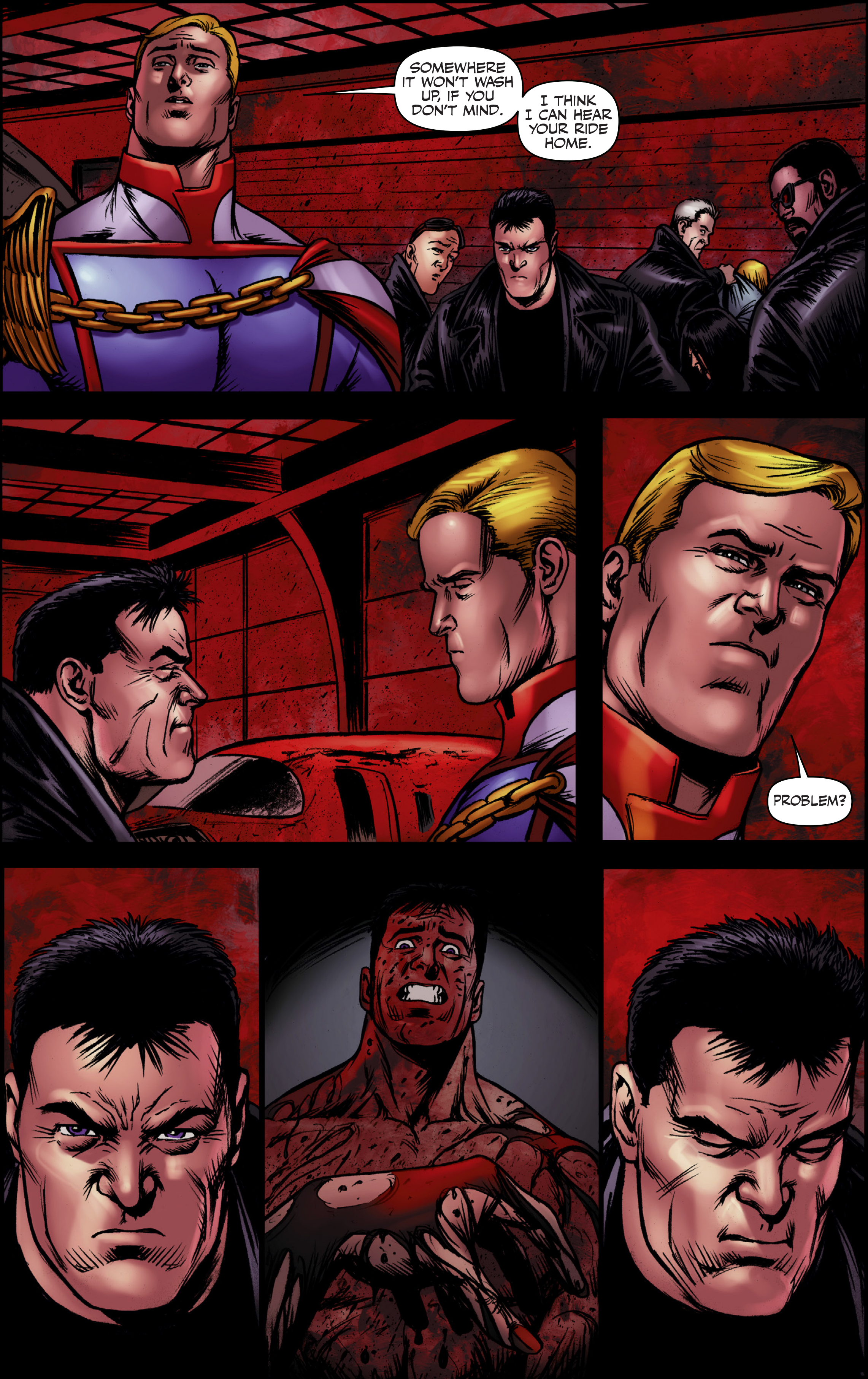

WHAT DO YOU SAY WE GET DOWN TO BUSINESS?

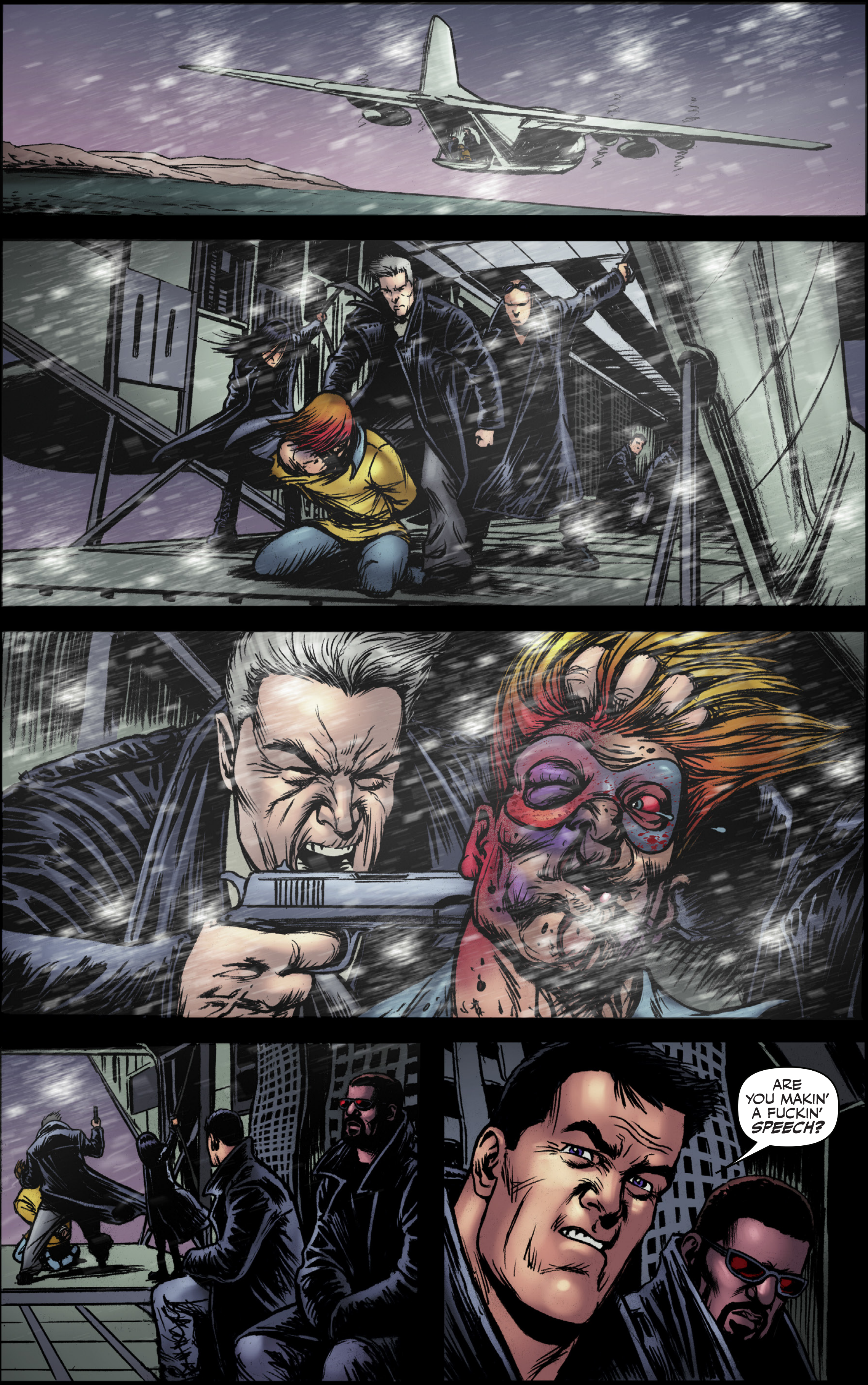


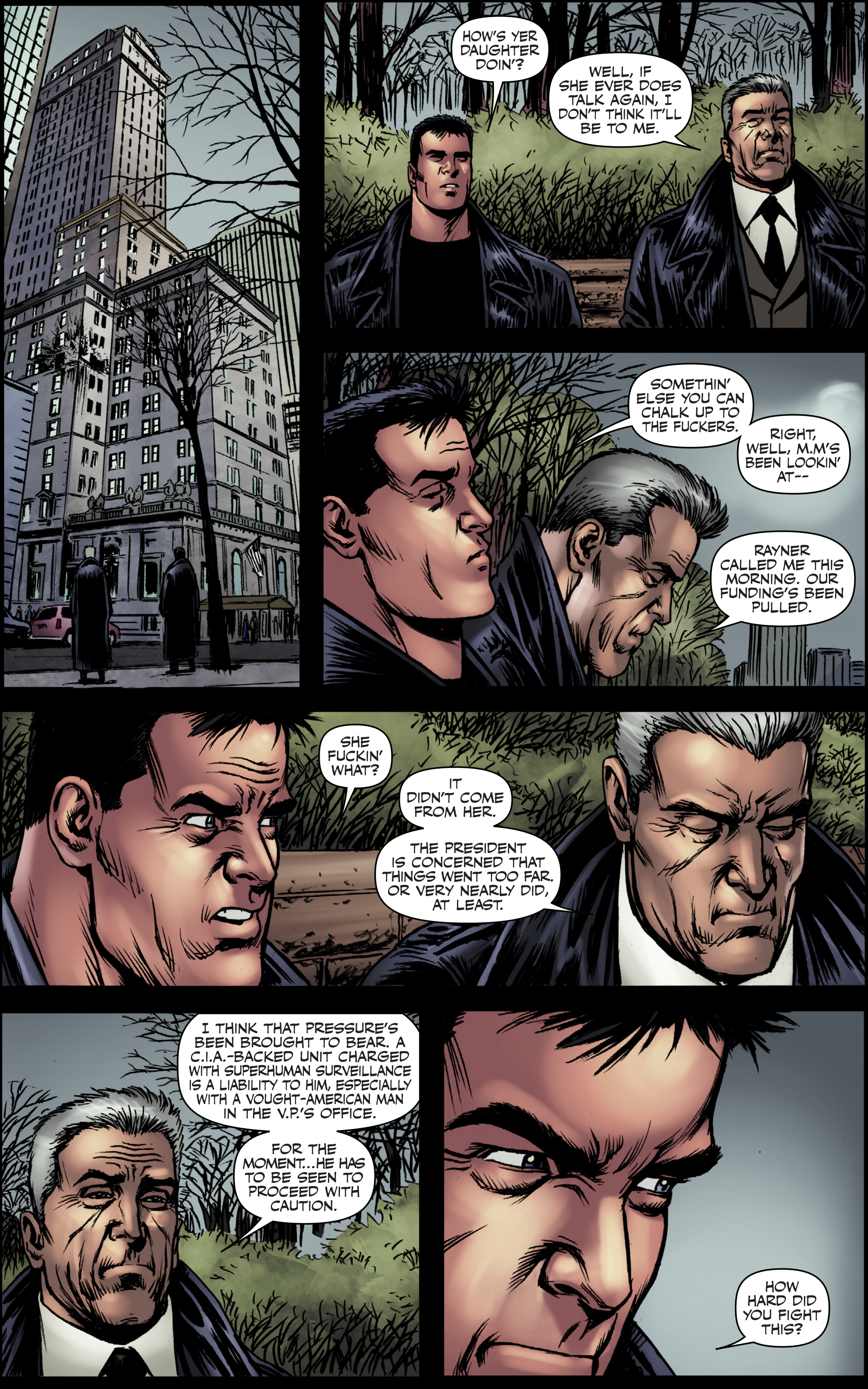

YOU *DID* THIS--?
MM.
YOU COULD BARELY COPE WITH HALF A DOZEN RAGHEADS ON THAT PLANE, AN' YOU'RE TRYNNA SAY YOU DID THIS MOB WITHOUT 'EM FIRIN' A SHOT?
WELL, WE LEARNED A LESSON FROM THAT LITTLE EPISODE.
NOISE WAS CERTAINLY A CONCERN, YES. WITH YOU BARELY A MILE AWAY OUT THERE.
SO WE HAD RED RIVER USE NERVE GAS FIRST.
AND AFTER THAT IT WAS EASY.
WELL, NOT EASY, EXACTLY, THERE WAS A CERTAIN DEGREE OF PHYSICAL EFFORT. BUT YOU GAVE US PLENTY OF TIME.
YOU *SAVAGES*...
JUST ME, ACTUALLY. SOLO EFFORT.
BUT THE OTHERS DEFINITELY PLAYED THEIR PART; THEY DID AN EXCELLENT JOB OF HOLDING MY UNIFORM FOR ME.

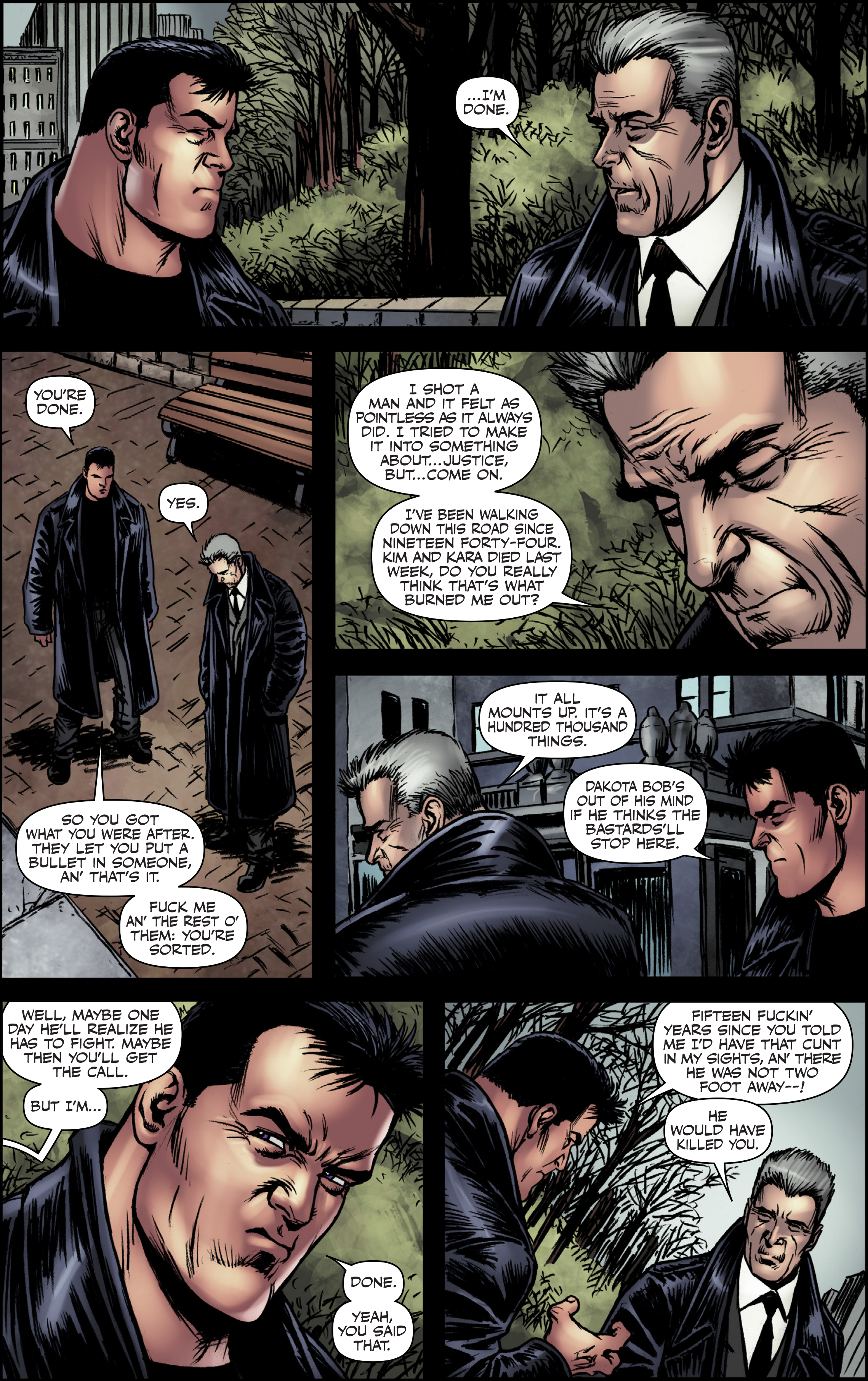

YOU'RE TALKIN' LIKE YOU COME UP WITH THIS YERSELF.
NOT IMPORTANT.
WE'RE MAKING A POINT. WE'RE HELPING YOU SEE.
YOU KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT SEPTEMBER. YOU HAVE OTHER MATERIAL. BUT YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT ALL THAT WILL ONLY TAKE YOU SO FAR.
NEVER MIND THE CERTAINTY OF YOUR OWN DEATHS. LOOK AT WHAT YOU'RE STANDING IN, AND THEN EXTRAPOLATE.
THAT SAID: AN IRREVERSIBLE DEGREE OF TURMOIL PROFITS NO ONE. WHAT WE'RE SUGGESTING IS A MUTUAL RETREAT FROM THE BRINK.
VOUGHT-AMERICAN ARE PREPARED TO SUSPEND THEIR PROGRAM OF SUPERPOWER IN NATIONAL DEFENSE--ON A TEMPORARY BASIS. THEY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE CONCEPT NEEDS SOME FURTHER THOUGHT.
GODDAMN RIGHT IT DOES...
ALSO: COLONEL MALLORY, YOU SUFFERED A PERSONAL TRAGEDY. IN THE AIRCRAFT BEHIND YOU IS AN ITEM OF COMPENSATION.

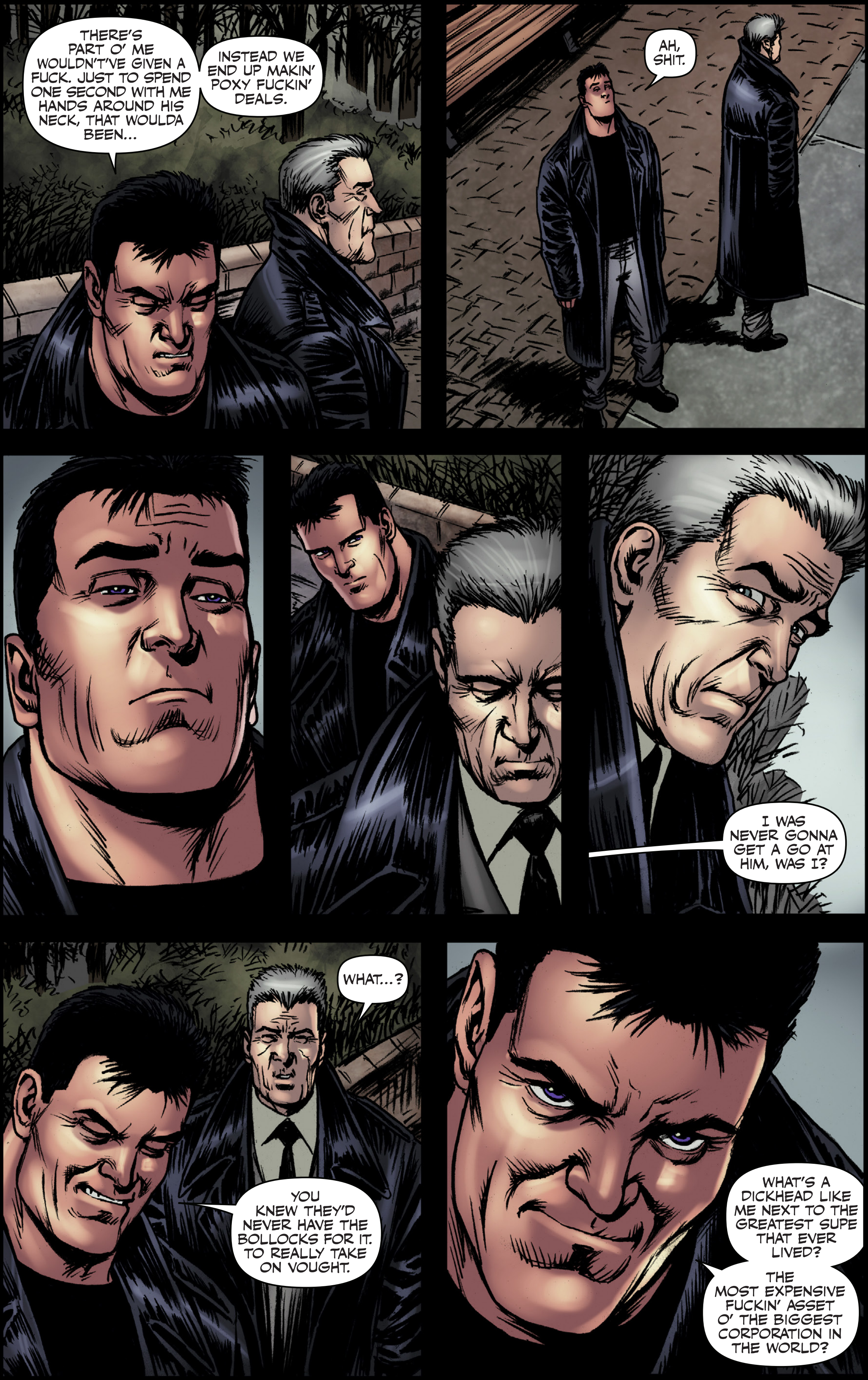

DO YOU KNOW WHAT I HATE?

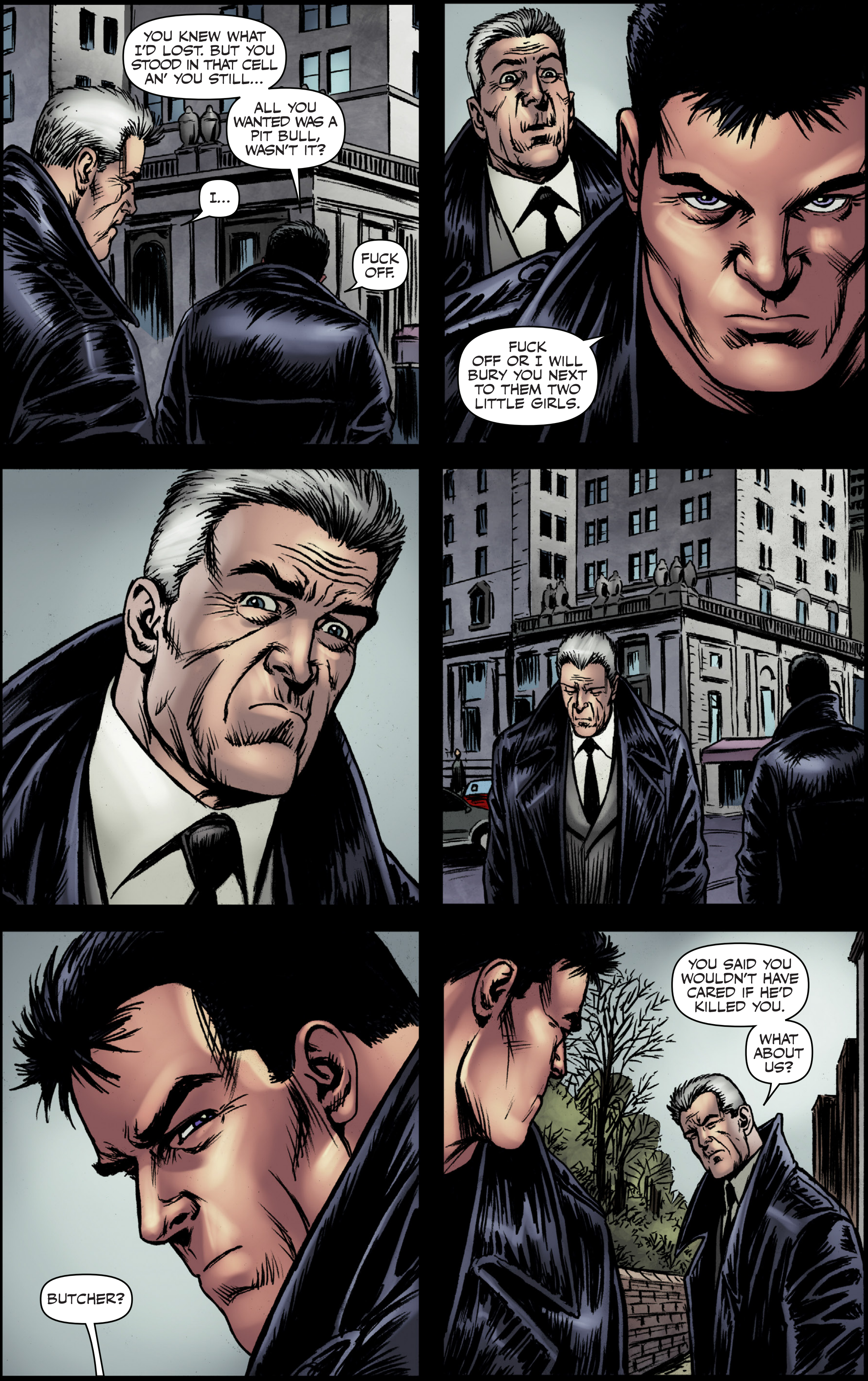

SOMEWHERE IT WON'T WASH UP, IF YOU DON'T MIND.
I THINK I CAN HEAR YOUR RIDE HOME.
PROBLEM?

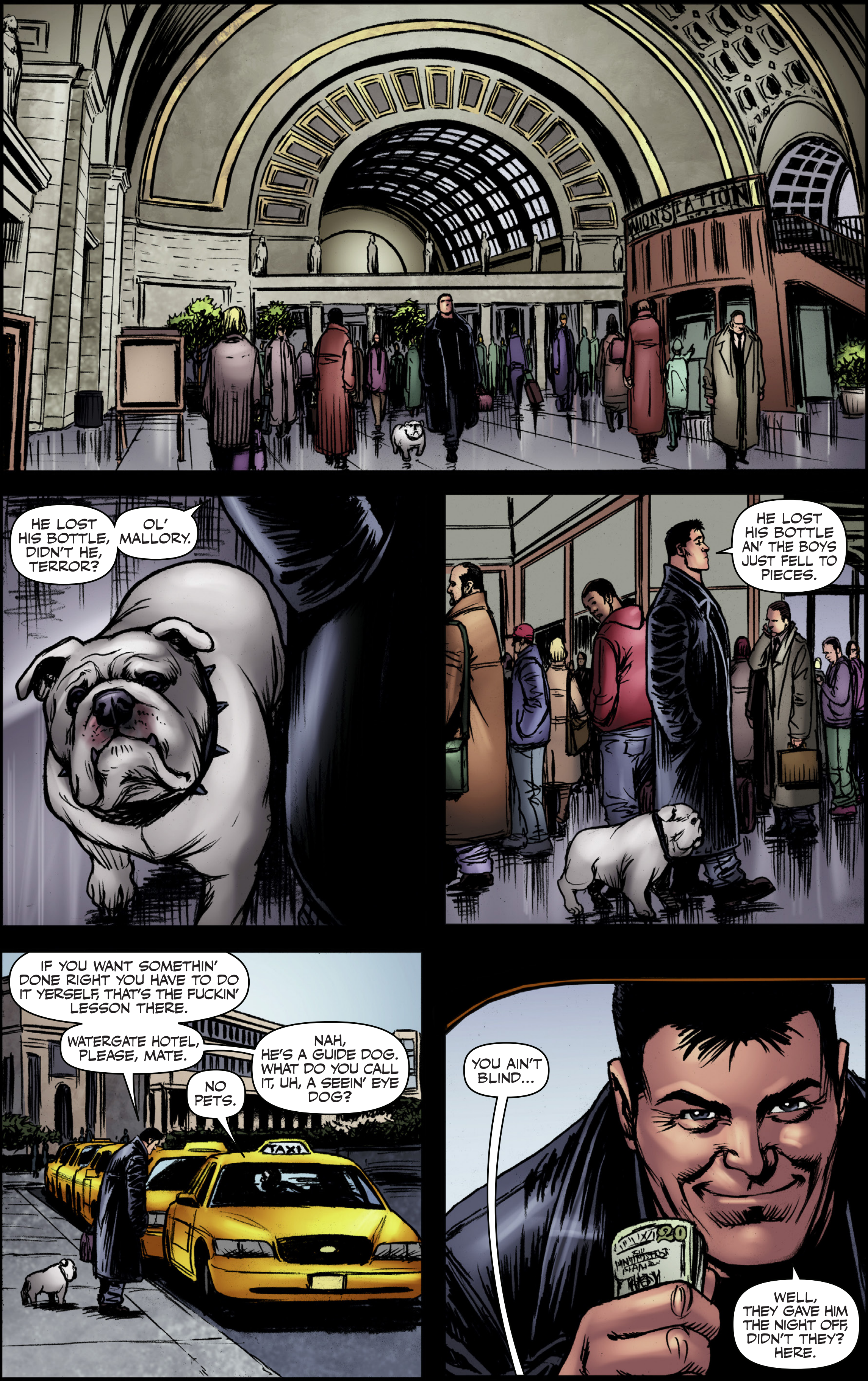

ARE YOU MAKIN' A FUCKIN' *SPEECH?*

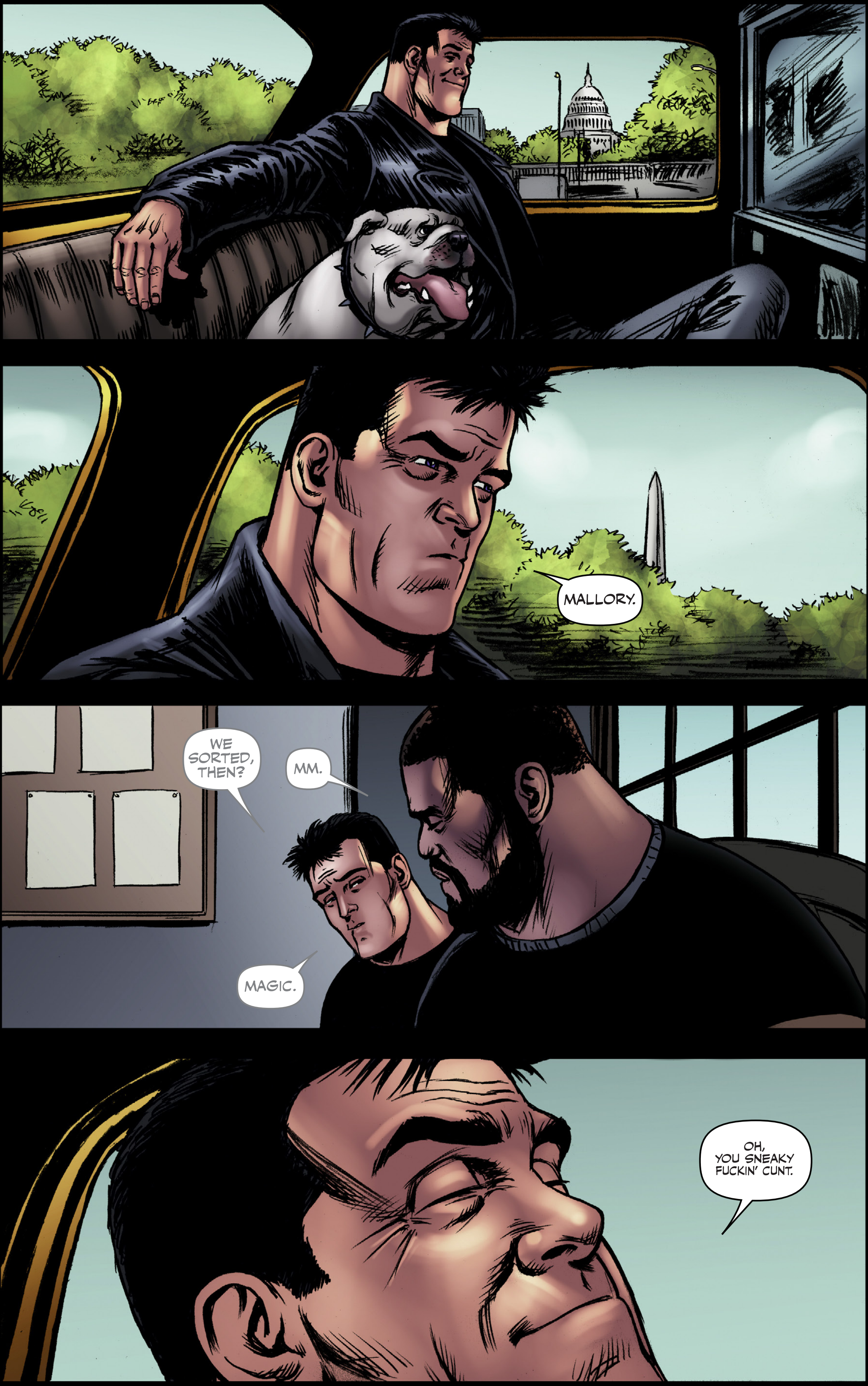

HOW'S YER DAUGHTER DOIN'?
WELL, IF SHE EVER DOES TALK AGAIN, I DON'T THINK IT'LL BE TO ME.
SOMETHIN' ELSE YOU CAN CHALK UP TO THE FUCKERS.
RIGHT, WELL, M.M'S BEEN LOOKIN' AT--
RAYNER CALLED ME THIS MORNING. OUR FUNDING'S BEEN PULLED.
SHE FUCKIN' WHAT?
IT DIDN'T COME FROM HER.
THE PRESIDENT IS CONCERNED THAT THINGS WENT TOO FAR. OR VERY NEARLY DID, AT LEAST.
I THINK THAT PRESSURE'S BEEN BROUGHT TO BEAR. A C.I.A.-BACKED UNIT CHARGED WITH SUPERHUMAN SURVEILLANCE IS A LIABILITY TO HIM, ESPECIALLY WITH A VOUGHT-AMERICAN MAN IN THE V.P.'S OFFICE.
FOR THE MOMENT...HE HAS TO BE SEEN TO PROCEED WITH CAUTION.
HOW HARD DID YOU FIGHT THIS?


...I'M DONE.
YOU'RE DONE.
YES.
SO YOU GOT WHAT YOU WERE AFTER. THEY LET YOU PUT A BULLET IN SOMEONE, AN' THAT'S IT.
FUCK ME AN' THE REST O' THEM: YOU'RE SORTED.
I SHOT A MAN AND IT FELT AS POINTLESS AS IT ALWAYS DID. I TRIED TO MAKE IT INTO SOMETHING ABOUT...JUSTICE, BUT...COME ON.
I'VE BEEN WALKING DOWN THIS ROAD SINCE NINETEEN FORTY-FOUR. KIM AND KARA DIED LAST WEEK, DO YOU REALLY THINK THAT'S WHAT BURNED ME OUT?
IT ALL MOUNTS UP. IT'S A HUNDRED THOUSAND THINGS.
DAKOTA BOB'S OUT OF HIS MIND IF HE THINKS THE BASTARDS'LL STOP HERE.
WELL, MAYBE ONE DAY HE'LL REALIZE HE HAS TO FIGHT. MAYBE THEN YOU'LL GET THE CALL.
BUT I'M...
DONE.
YEAH, YOU SAID THAT.
FIFTEEN FUCKIN' YEARS SINCE YOU TOLD ME I'D HAVE THAT CUNT IN MY SIGHTS, AN' THERE HE WAS NOT TWO FOOT AWAY--!
HE WOULD HAVE KILLED YOU.


THERE'S PART O' ME WOULDN'T'VE GIVEN A FUCK. JUST TO SPEND ONE SECOND WITH ME HANDS AROUND HIS NECK, THAT WOULDA BEEN...
INSTEAD WE END UP MAKIN' POXY FUCKIN' DEALS.
AH, SHIT.
I WAS NEVER GONNA GET A GO AT HIM, WAS I?
WHAT...?
YOU KNEW THEY'D NEVER HAVE THE BOLLOCKS FOR IT. TO REALLY TAKE ON VOUGHT.
WHAT'S A DICKHEAD LIKE ME NEXT TO THE GREATEST SUPE THAT EVER LIVED?
THE MOST EXPENSIVE FUCKIN' ASSET O' THE BIGGEST CORPORATION IN THE WORLD?

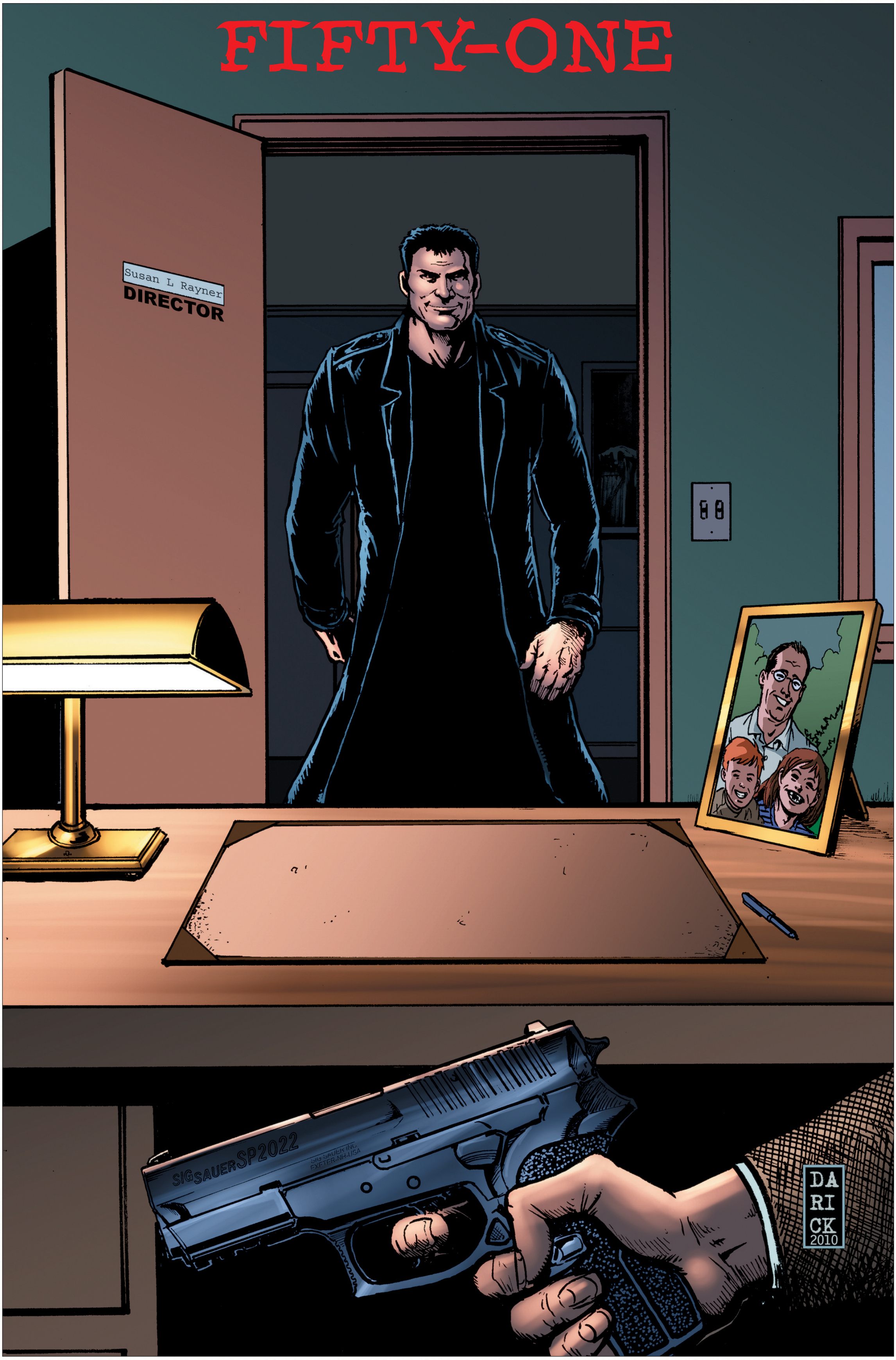

YOU KNEW WHAT I'D LOST. BUT YOU STOOD IN THAT CELL AN' YOU STILL...
ALL YOU WANTED WAS A PIT BULL, WASN'T IT?
I...
FUCK OFF.
FUCK OFF OR I WILL BURY YOU NEXT TO THEM TWO LITTLE GIRLS.
BUTCHER?
YOU SAID YOU WOULDN'T HAVE CARED IF HE'D KILLED YOU.
WHAT ABOUT US?

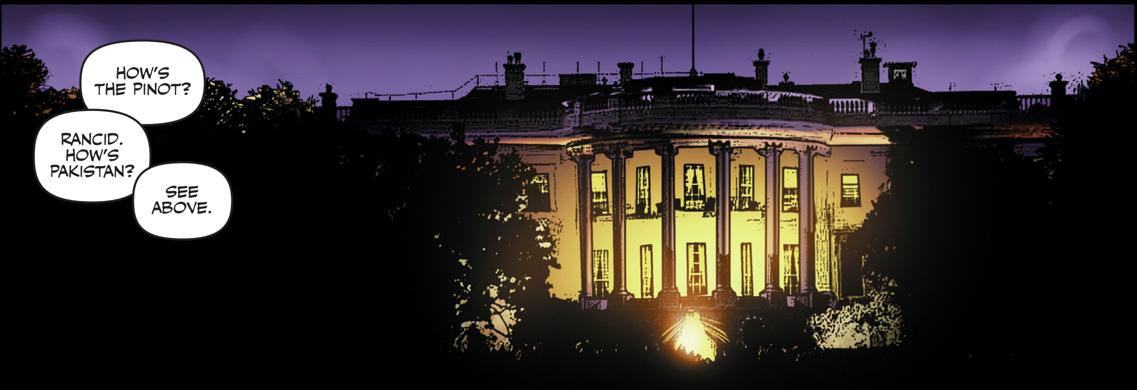

HE LOST HIS BOTTLE, DIDN'T HE, TERROR?
OL' MALLORY.
HE LOST HIS BOTTLE AN' THE BOYS JUST FELL TO PIECES.
IF YOU WANT SOMETHIN' DONE RIGHT YOU HAVE TO DO IT YERSELF, THAT'S THE FUCKIN' LESSON THERE.
WATERGATE HOTEL, PLEASE, MATE.
NO PETS.
NAH, HE'S A GUIDE DOG. WHAT DO YOU CALL IT, UH, A SEEIN' EYE DOG?
TAXI
YOU AIN'T BLIND...
WELL, THEY GAVE HIM THE NIGHT OFF, DIDN'T THEY? HERE.

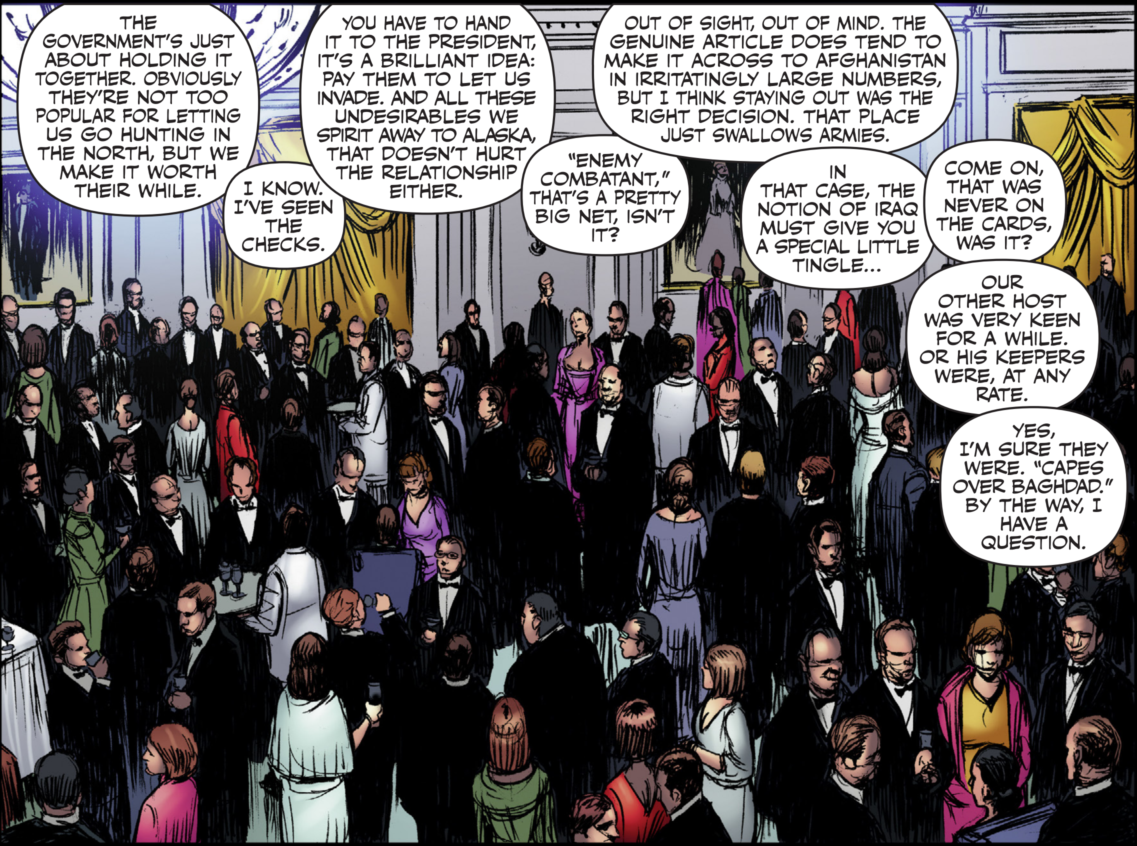

MALLORY.
WE SORTED, THEN?
MM.
MAGIC.
OH, YOU SNEAKY FUCKIN' CUNT.

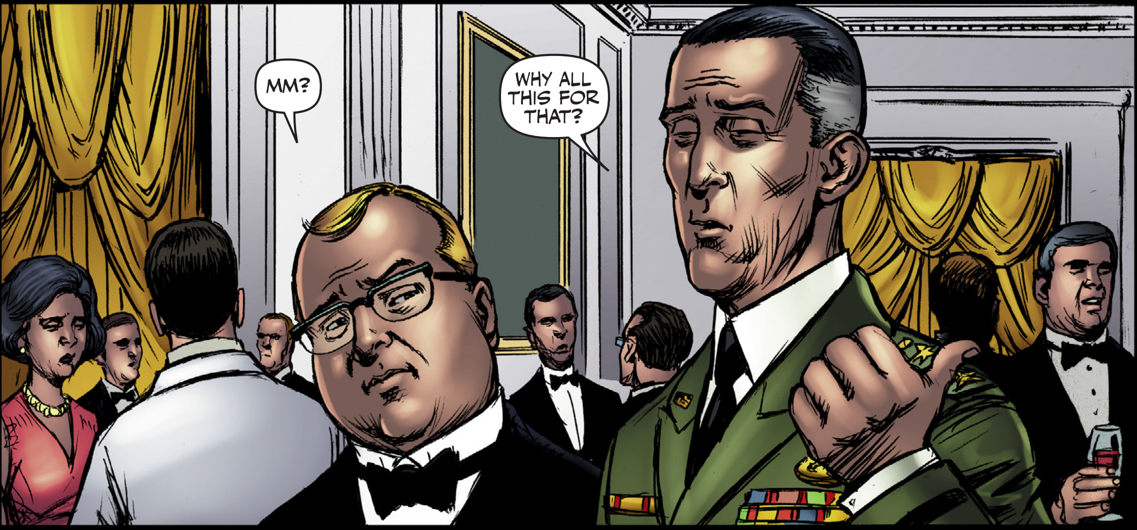
next: MONKEY MAGIC

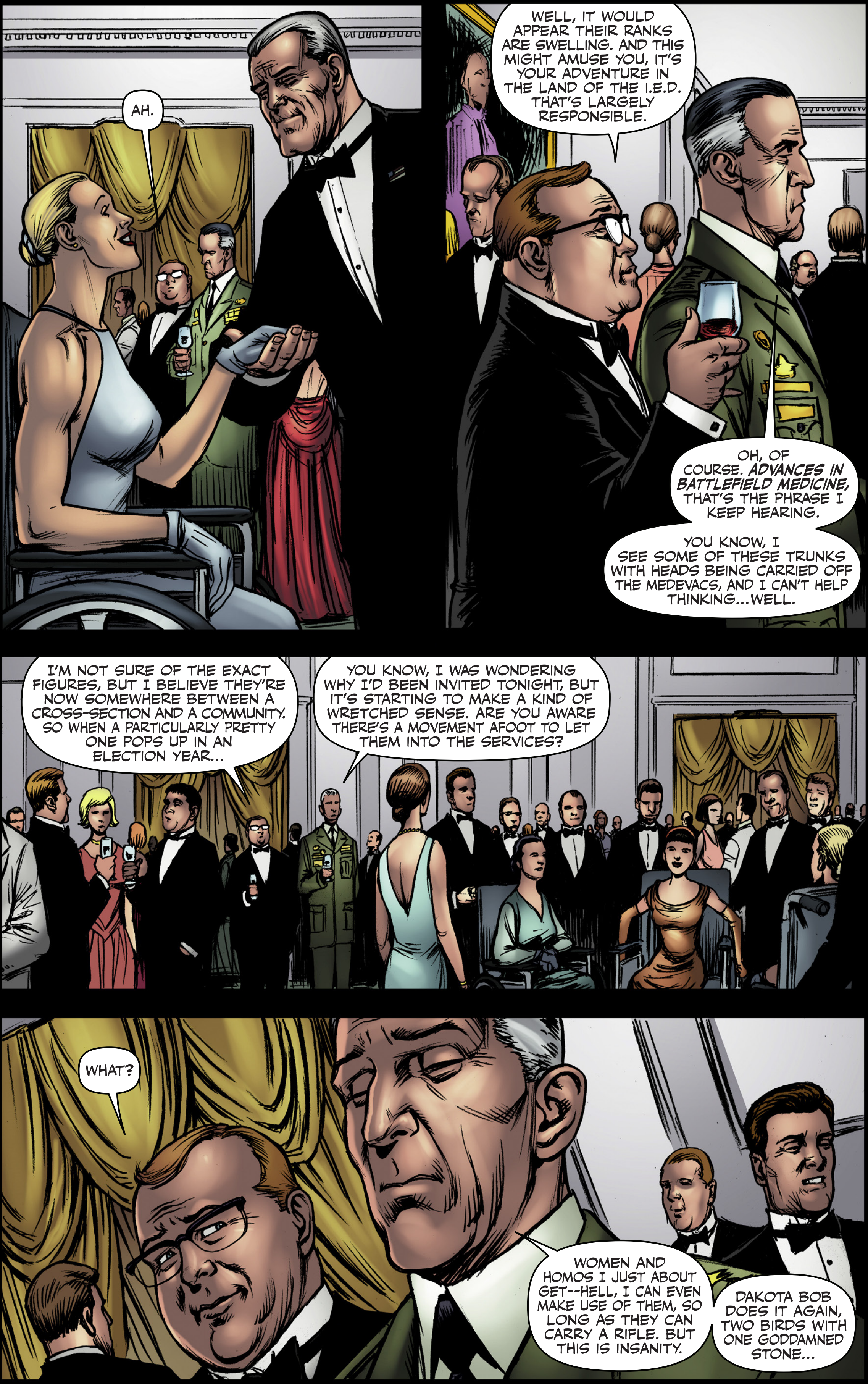
FIFTY-ONE

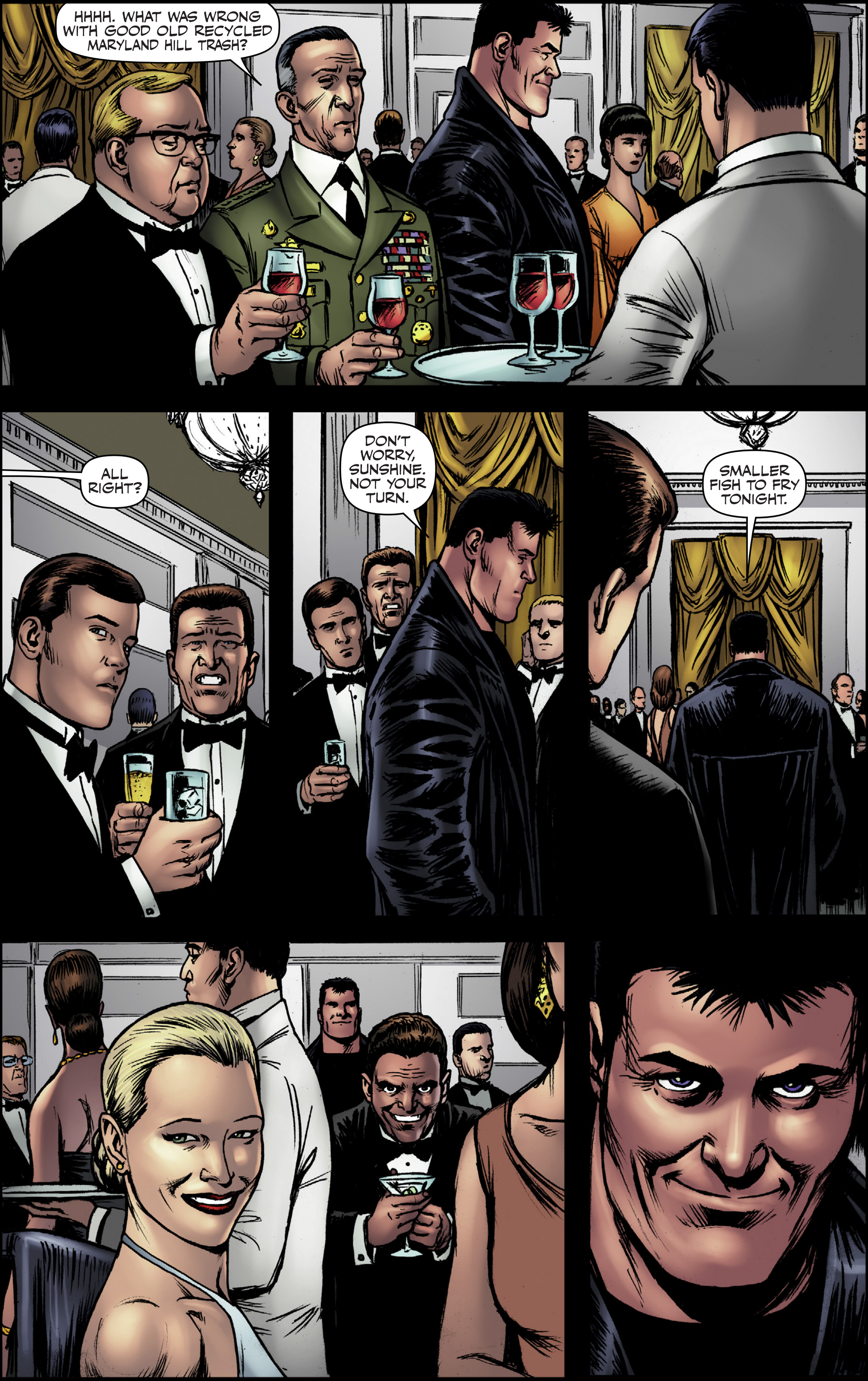

Susan L Rayner
DIRECTOR
SIG SAUER SP2022
SIG SAUER INC EXETER, NH USA
DA RI CK 2010

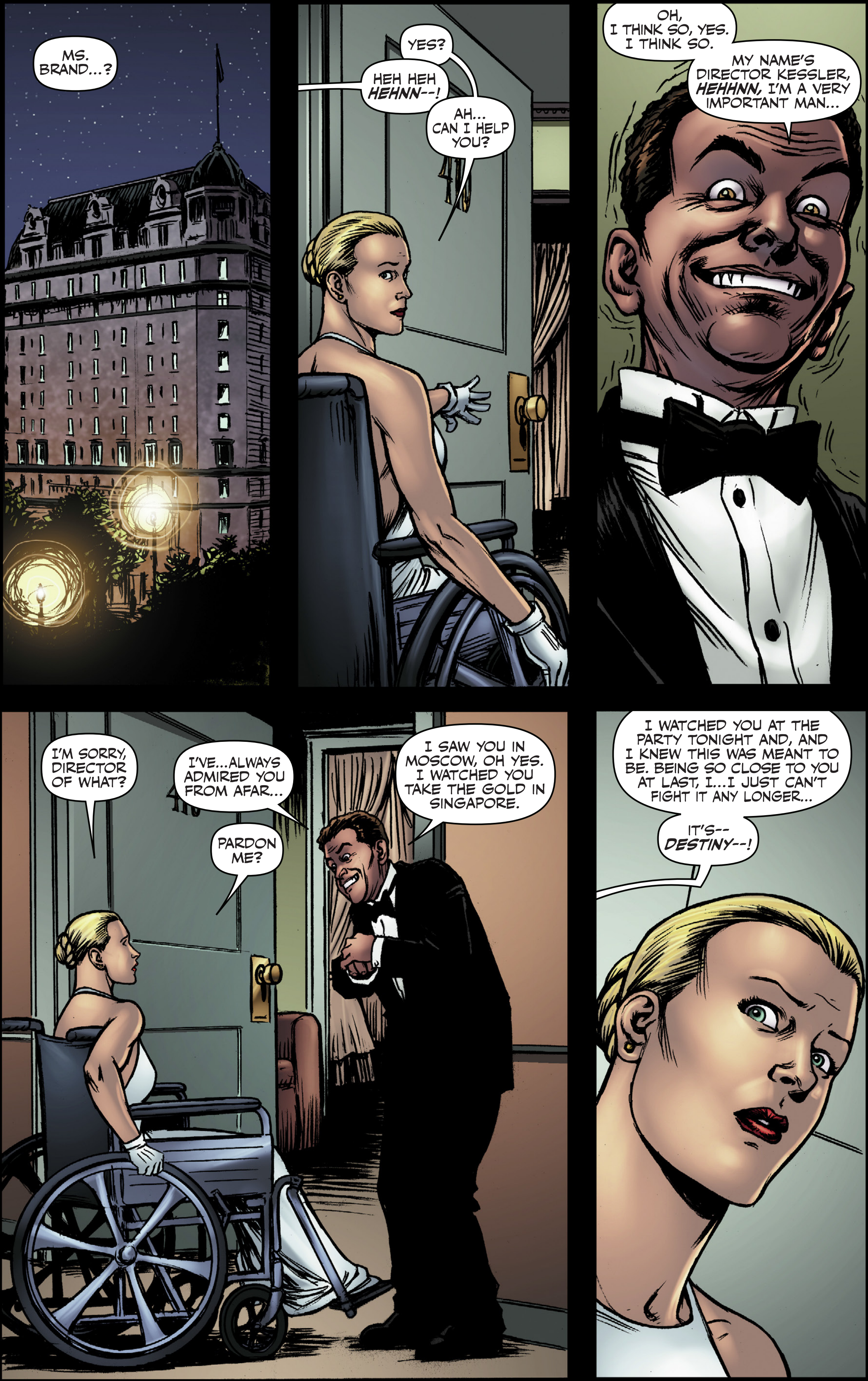

HOW'S THE PINOT?
RANCID. HOW'S PAKISTAN?
SEE ABOVE.

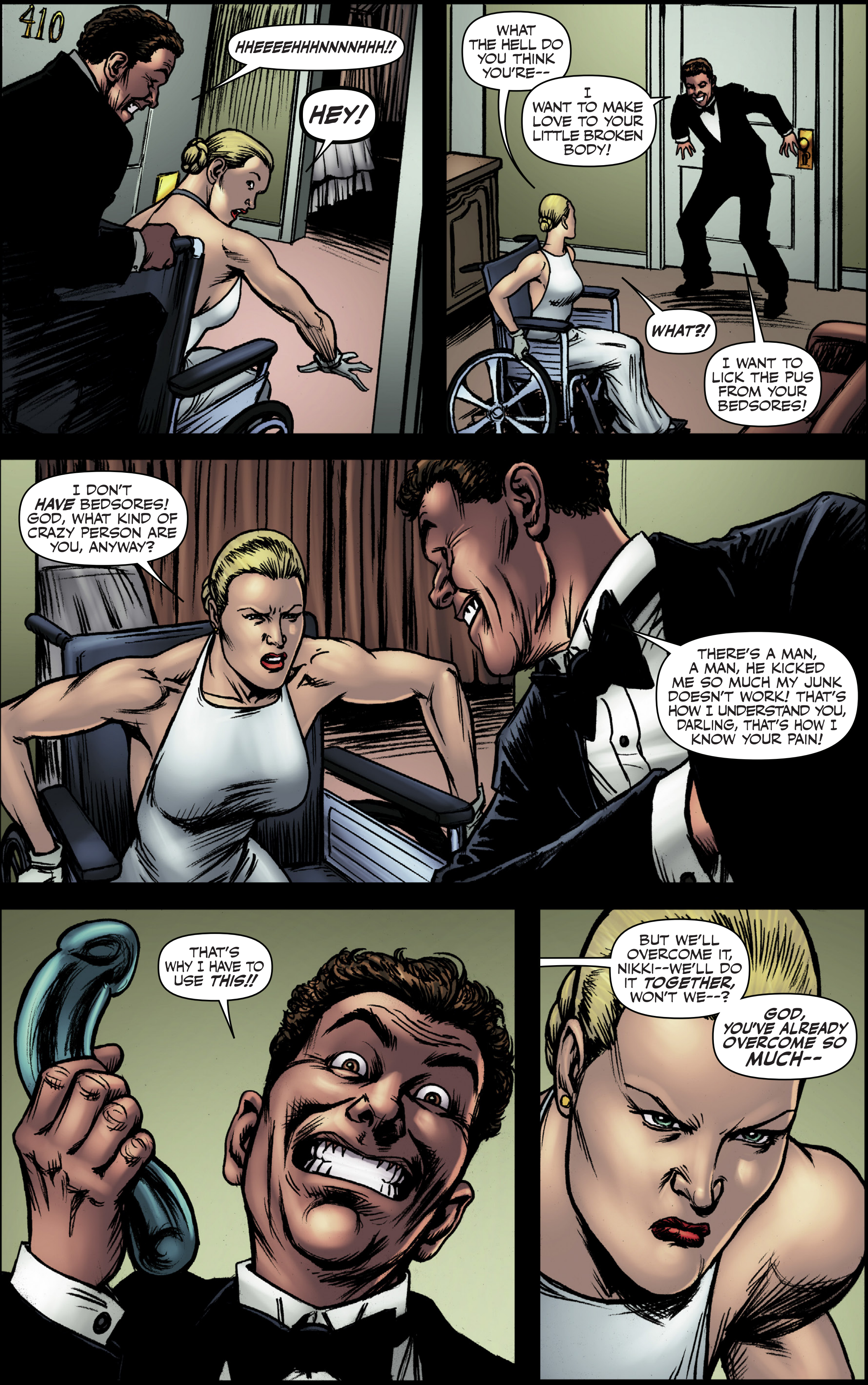

THE GOVERNMENT'S JUST ABOUT HOLDING IT TOGETHER. OBVIOUSLY THEY'RE NOT TOO POPULAR FOR LETTING US GO HUNTING IN THE NORTH, BUT WE MAKE IT WORTH THEIR WHILE.
I KNOW. I'VE SEEN THE CHECKS.
YOU HAVE TO HAND IT TO THE PRESIDENT, IT'S A BRILLIANT IDEA: PAY THEM TO LET US INVADE. AND ALL THESE UNDESIRABLES WE SPIRIT AWAY TO ALASKA, THAT DOESN'T HURT THE RELATIONSHIP EITHER.
"ENEMY COMBATANT," THAT'S A PRETTY BIG NET, ISN'T IT?
OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND. THE GENUINE ARTICLE DOES TEND TO MAKE IT ACROSS TO AFGHANISTAN IN IRRITATINGLY LARGE NUMBERS, BUT I THINK STAYING OUT WAS THE RIGHT DECISION. THAT PLACE JUST SWALLOWS ARMIES.
IN THAT CASE, THE NOTION OF IRAQ MUST GIVE YOU A SPECIAL LITTLE TINGLE...
COME ON, THAT WAS NEVER ON THE CARDS, WAS IT?
OUR OTHER HOST WAS VERY KEEN FOR A WHILE. OR HIS KEEPERS WERE, AT ANY RATE.
YES, I'M SURE THEY WERE. "CAPES OVER BAGHDAD." BY THE WAY, I HAVE A QUESTION.

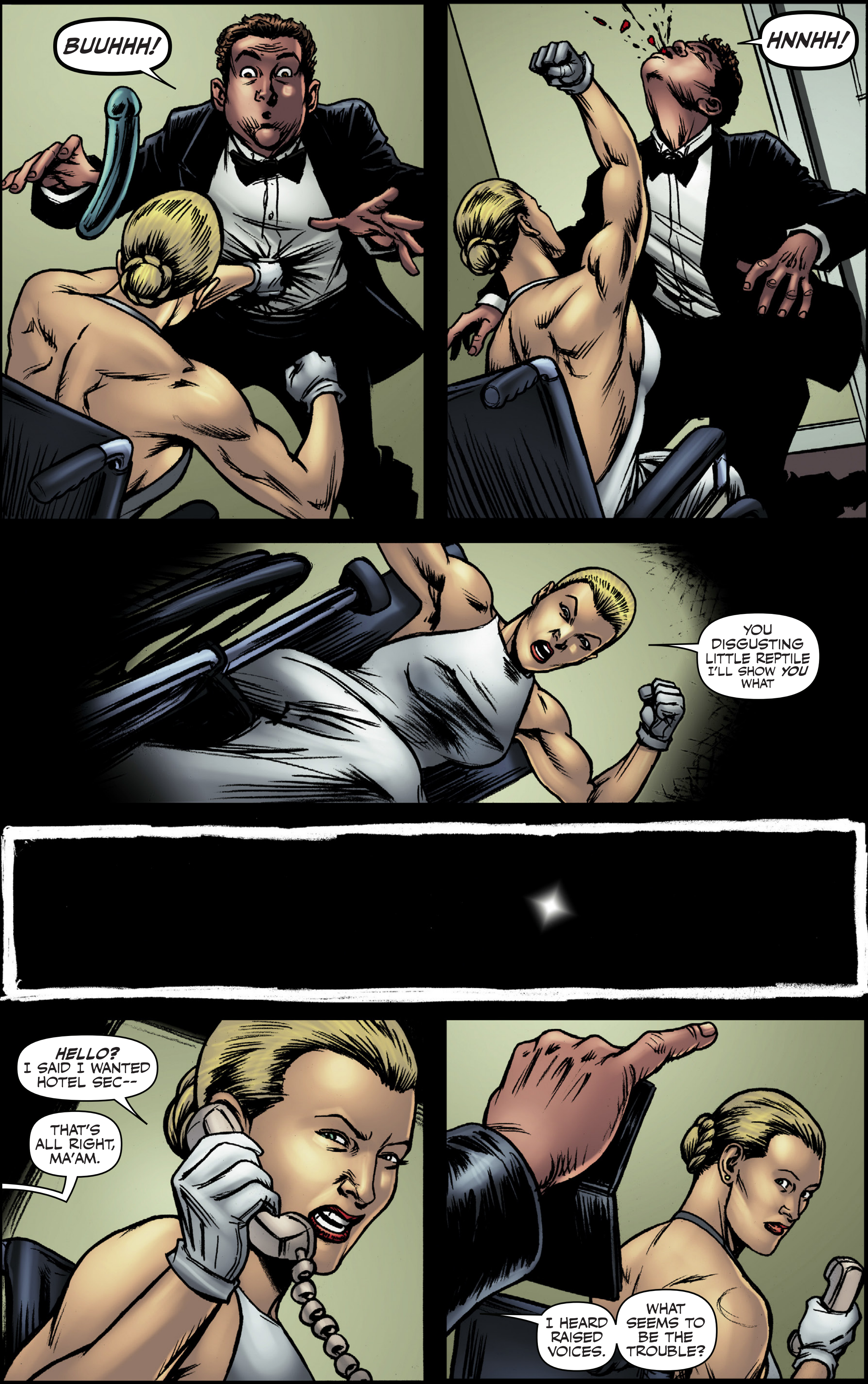

MM?
WHY ALL THIS FOR THAT?

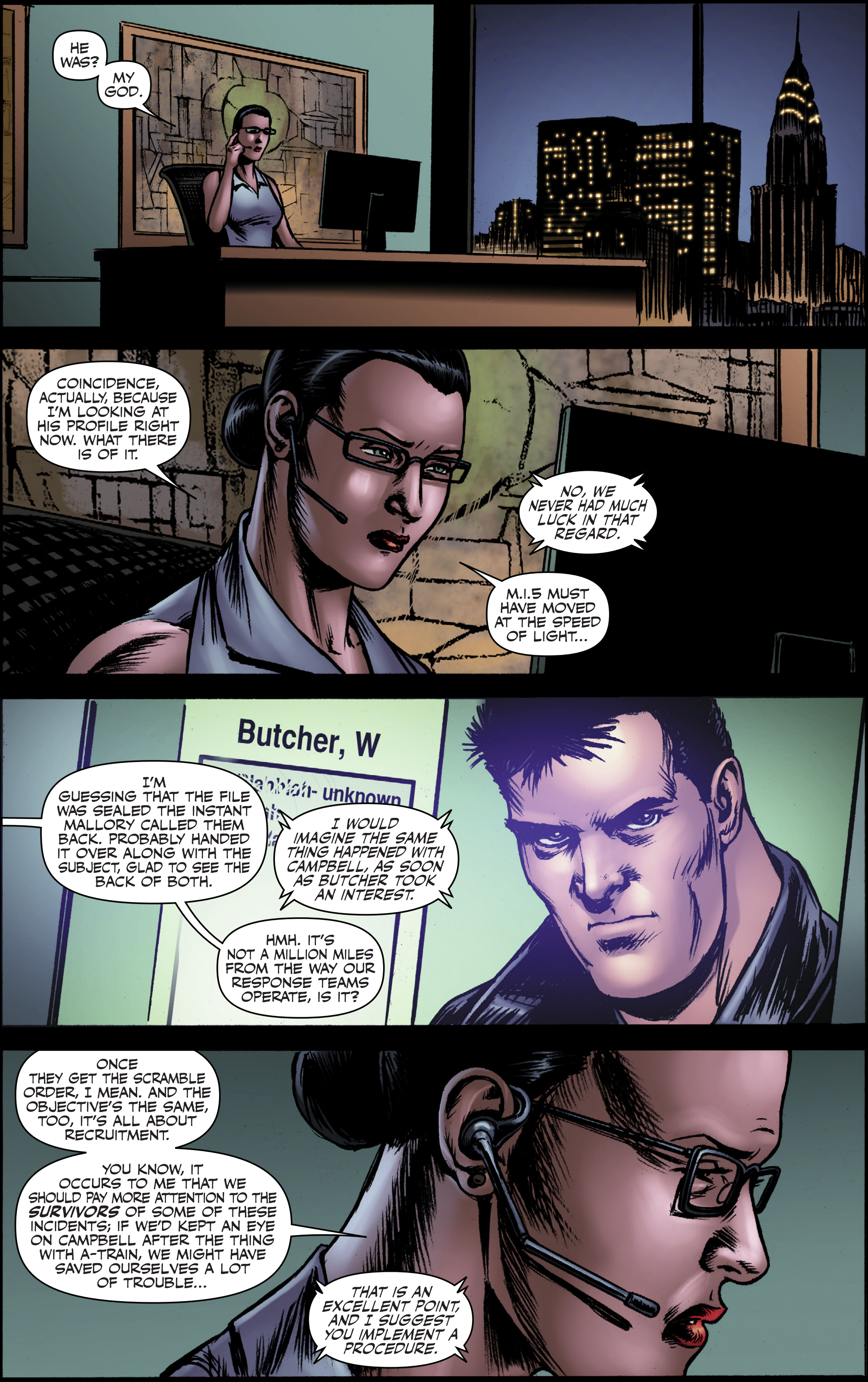

AH.
WELL, IT WOULD APPEAR THEIR RANKS ARE SWELLING. AND THIS MIGHT AMUSE YOU, IT'S YOUR ADVENTURE IN THE LAND OF THE I.E.D. THAT'S LARGELY RESPONSIBLE.
OH, OF COURSE. *ADVANCES IN BATTLEFIELD MEDICINE,* THAT'S THE PHRASE I KEEP HEARING.
YOU KNOW, I SEE SOME OF THESE TRUNKS WITH HEADS BEING CARRIED OFF THE MEDEVACS, AND I CAN'T HELP THINKING...WELL.
I'M NOT SURE OF THE EXACT FIGURES, BUT I BELIEVE THEY'RE NOW SOMEWHERE BETWEEN A CROSS-SECTION AND A COMMUNITY. SO WHEN A PARTICULARLY PRETTY ONE POPS UP IN AN ELECTION YEAR...
YOU KNOW, I WAS WONDERING WHY I'D BEEN INVITED TONIGHT, BUT IT'S STARTING TO MAKE A KIND OF WRETCHED SENSE. ARE YOU AWARE THERE'S A MOVEMENT AFOOT TO LET THEM INTO THE SERVICES?
WHAT?
WOMEN AND HOMOS I JUST ABOUT GET--HELL, I CAN EVEN MAKE USE OF THEM, SO LONG AS THEY CAN CARRY A RIFLE. BUT THIS IS INSANITY.
DAKOTA BOB DOES IT AGAIN, TWO BIRDS WITH ONE GODDAMNED STONE...

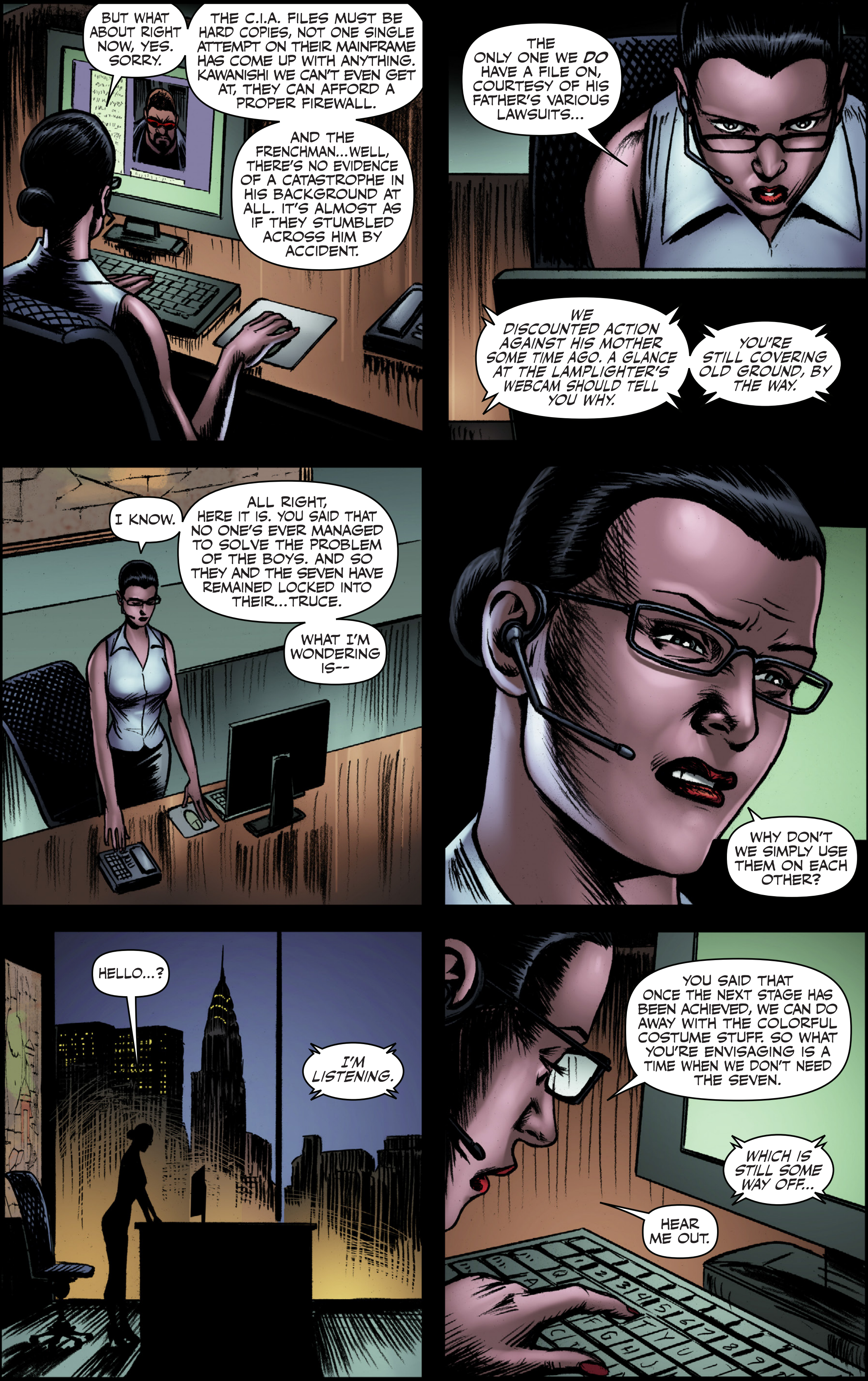

HHHH. WHAT WAS WRONG WITH GOOD OLD RECYCLED MARYLAND HILL TRASH?
ALL RIGHT?
DON'T WORRY, SUNSHINE. NOT YOUR TURN.
SMALLER FISH TO FRY TONIGHT.

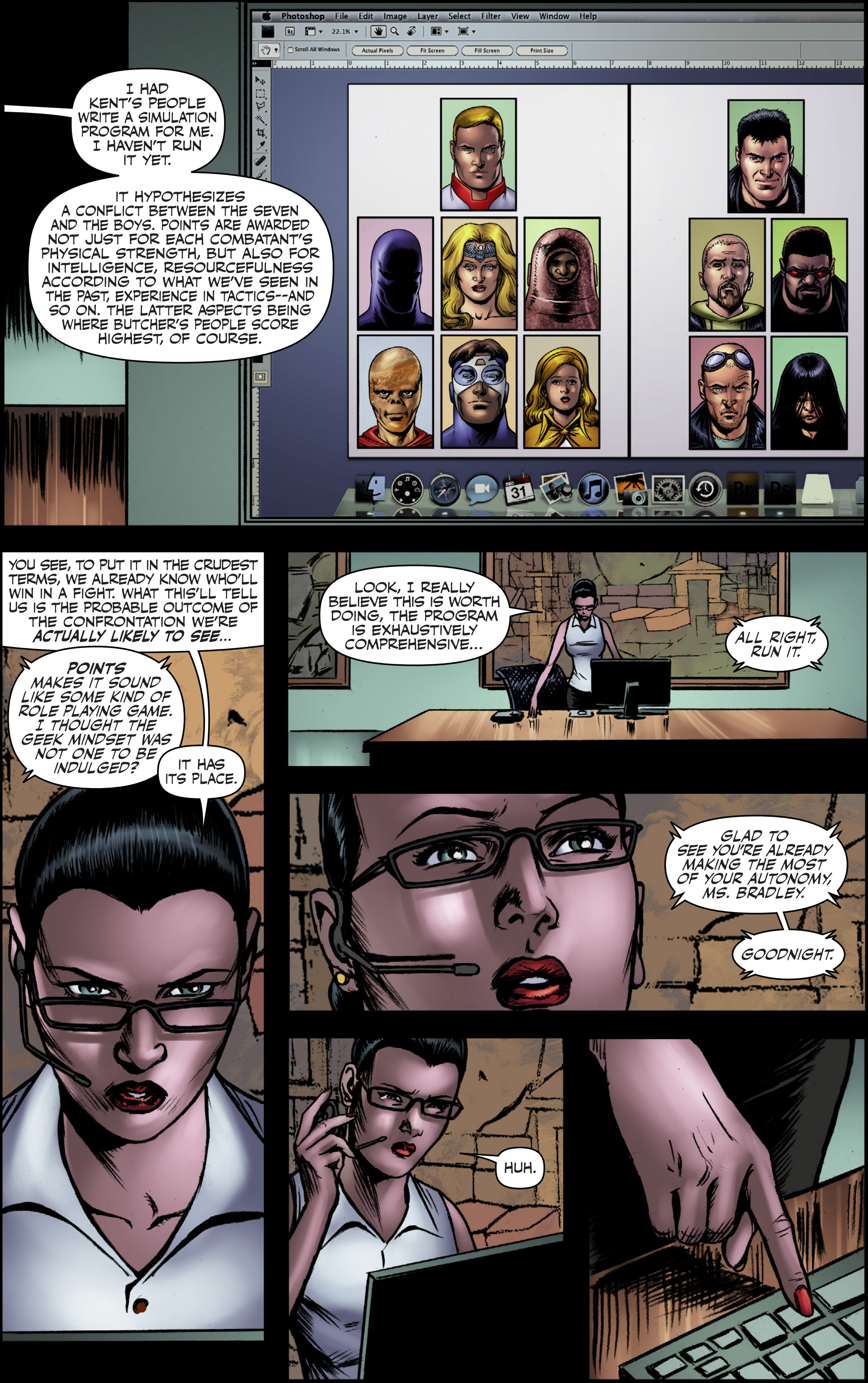

MS. BRAND...?
YES?
HEH HEH *HEHNN*--!
AH... CAN I HELP YOU?
OH, I THINK SO, YES. I THINK SO.
MY NAME'S DIRECTOR KESSLER, *HEHHNN,* I'M A VERY IMPORTANT MAN...
I'M SORRY, DIRECTOR OF WHAT?
I'VE...ALWAYS ADMIRED YOU FROM AFAR...
PARDON ME?
I SAW YOU IN MOSCOW, OH YES. I WATCHED YOU TAKE THE GOLD IN SINGAPORE.
I WATCHED YOU AT THE PARTY TONIGHT AND, AND I KNEW THIS WAS MEANT TO BE. BEING SO CLOSE TO YOU AT LAST, I...I JUST CAN'T FIGHT IT ANY LONGER...
IT'S-- *DESTINY*--!


410
HHEEEEHHHHNNNNHHH!!
HEY!
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE--
I WANT TO MAKE LOVE TO YOUR LITTLE BROKEN BODY!
WHAT?!
I WANT TO LICK THE PUS FROM YOUR BEDSORES!
I DON'T HAVE BEDSORES! GOD, WHAT KIND OF CRAZY PERSON ARE YOU, ANYWAY?
THERE'S A MAN, A MAN, HE KICKED ME SO MUCH MY JUNK DOESN'T WORK! THAT'S HOW I UNDERSTAND YOU, DARLING, THAT'S HOW I KNOW YOUR PAIN!
THAT'S WHY I HAVE TO USE THIS!!
BUT WE'LL OVERCOME IT, NIKKI--WE'LL DO IT TOGETHER, WON'T WE--?
GOD, YOU'VE ALREADY OVERCOME SO MUCH--


BUUHHH!
HNNHH!
YOU DISGUSTING LITTLE REPTILE I'LL SHOW *YOU* WHAT
HELLO? I SAID I WANTED HOTEL SEC--
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, MA'AM.
I HEARD RAISED VOICES.
WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE TROUBLE?


HE WAS?
MY GOD.
COINCIDENCE, ACTUALLY, BECAUSE I'M LOOKING AT HIS PROFILE RIGHT NOW. WHAT THERE IS OF IT.
NO, WE NEVER HAD MUCH LUCK IN THAT REGARD.
M.I.5 MUST HAVE MOVED AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT...
Butcher, W
unknown
I'M GUESSING THAT THE FILE WAS SEALED THE INSTANT MALLORY CALLED THEM BACK. PROBABLY HANDED IT OVER ALONG WITH THE SUBJECT, GLAD TO SEE THE BACK OF BOTH.
I WOULD IMAGINE THE SAME THING HAPPENED WITH CAMPBELL, AS SOON AS BUTCHER TOOK AN INTEREST.
HMH. IT'S NOT A MILLION MILES FROM THE WAY OUR RESPONSE TEAMS OPERATE, IS IT?
ONCE THEY GET THE SCRAMBLE ORDER, I MEAN. AND THE OBJECTIVE'S THE SAME, TOO, IT'S ALL ABOUT RECRUITMENT.
YOU KNOW, IT OCCURS TO ME THAT WE SHOULD PAY MORE ATTENTION TO THE SURVIVORS OF SOME OF THESE INCIDENTS; IF WE'D KEPT AN EYE ON CAMPBELL AFTER THE THING WITH A-TRAIN, WE MIGHT HAVE SAVED OURSELVES A LOT OF TROUBLE...
THAT IS AN EXCELLENT POINT, AND I SUGGEST YOU IMPLEMENT A PROCEDURE.


BUT WHAT ABOUT RIGHT NOW, YES. SORRY.
THE C.I.A. FILES MUST BE HARD COPIES, NOT ONE SINGLE ATTEMPT ON THEIR MAINFRAME HAS COME UP WITH ANYTHING. KAWANISHI WE CAN'T EVEN GET AT, THEY CAN AFFORD A PROPER FIREWALL.
AND THE FRENCHMAN...WELL, THERE'S NO EVIDENCE OF A CATASTROPHE IN HIS BACKGROUND AT ALL. IT'S ALMOST AS IF THEY STUMBLED ACROSS HIM BY ACCIDENT.
THE ONLY ONE WE *DO* HAVE A FILE ON, COURTESY OF HIS FATHER'S VARIOUS LAWSUITS...
WE DISCOUNTED ACTION AGAINST HIS MOTHER SOME TIME AGO. A GLANCE AT THE LAMPLIGHTER'S WEBCAM SHOULD TELL YOU WHY.
YOU'RE STILL COVERING OLD GROUND, BY THE WAY.
I KNOW.
ALL RIGHT, HERE IT IS. YOU SAID THAT NO ONE'S EVER MANAGED TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF THE BOYS. AND SO THEY AND THE SEVEN HAVE REMAINED LOCKED INTO THEIR...TRUCE.
WHAT I'M WONDERING IS--
WHY DON'T WE SIMPLY USE THEM ON EACH OTHER?
HELLO...?
I'M LISTENING.
YOU SAID THAT ONCE THE NEXT STAGE HAS BEEN ACHIEVED, WE CAN DO AWAY WITH THE COLORFUL COSTUME STUFF. SO WHAT YOU'RE ENVISAGING IS A TIME WHEN WE DON'T NEED THE SEVEN.
WHICH IS STILL SOME WAY OFF...
HEAR ME OUT.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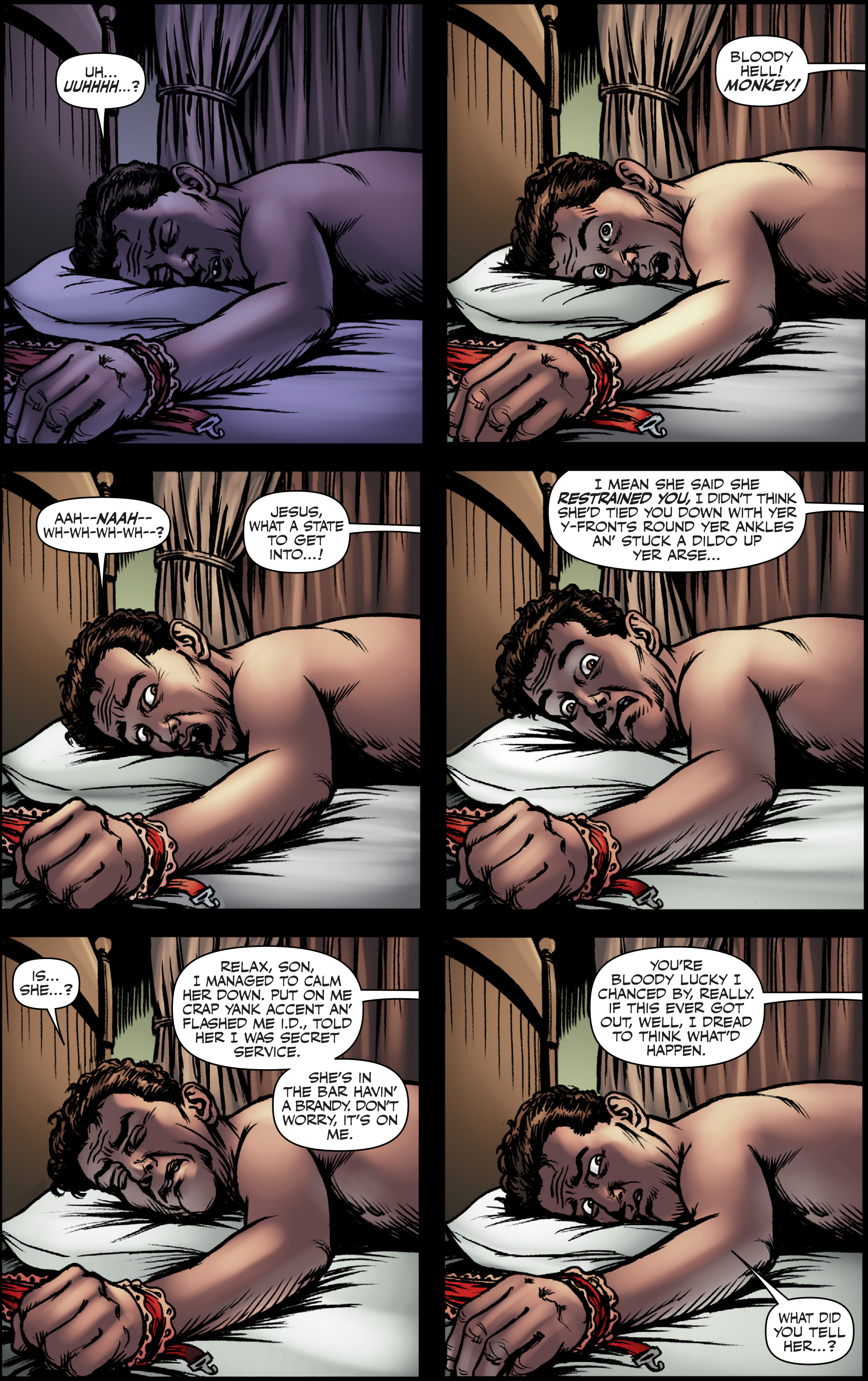
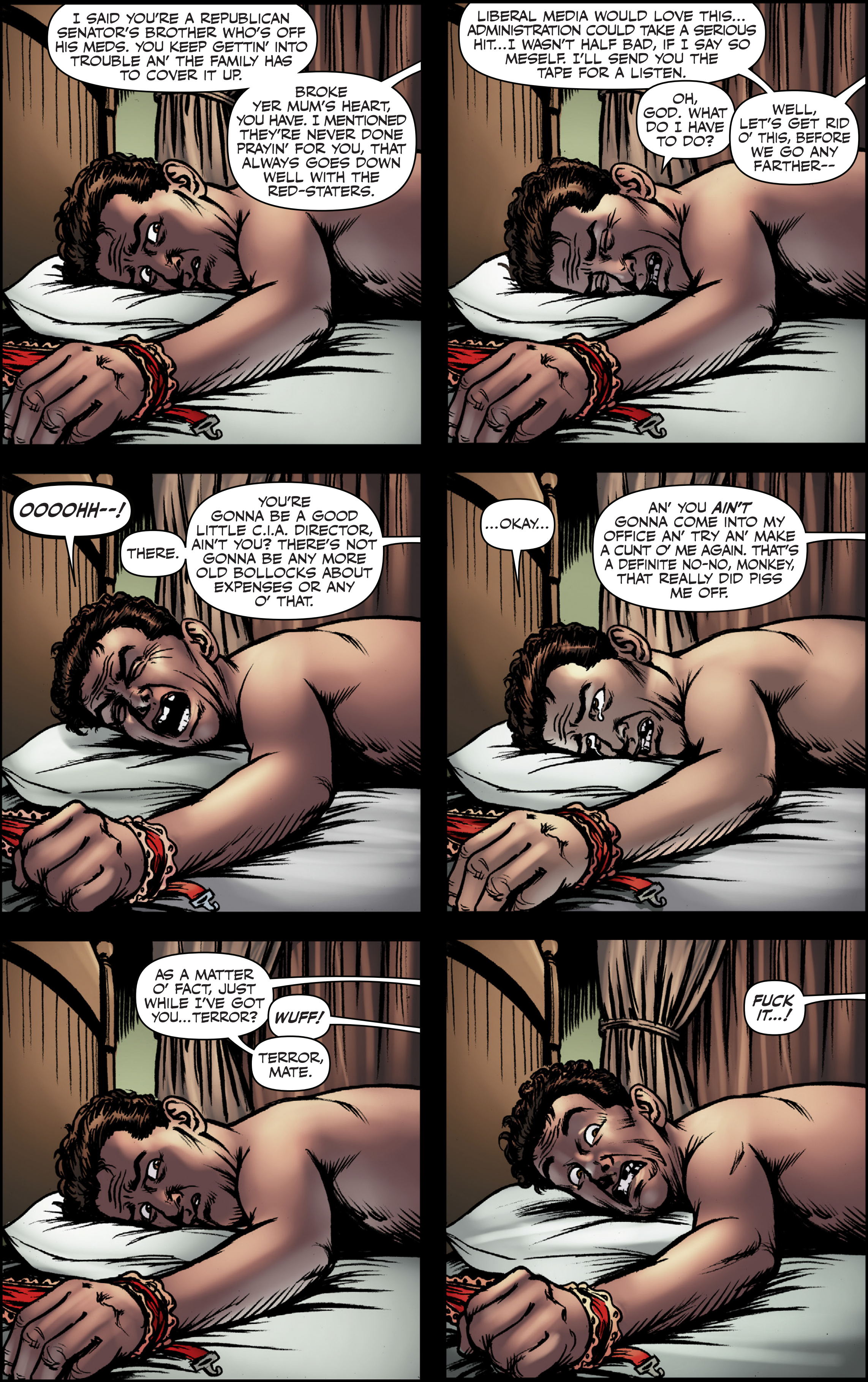
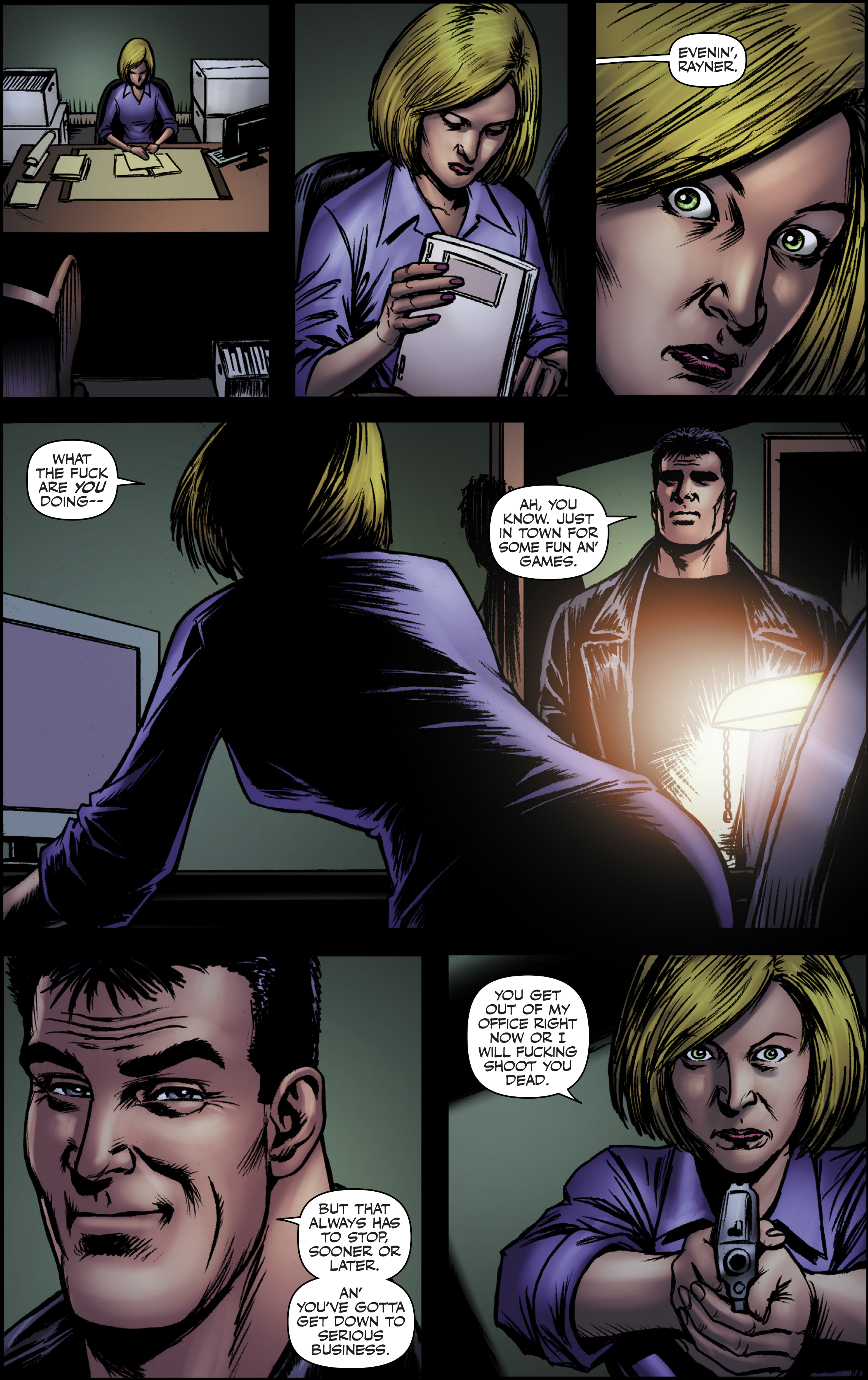
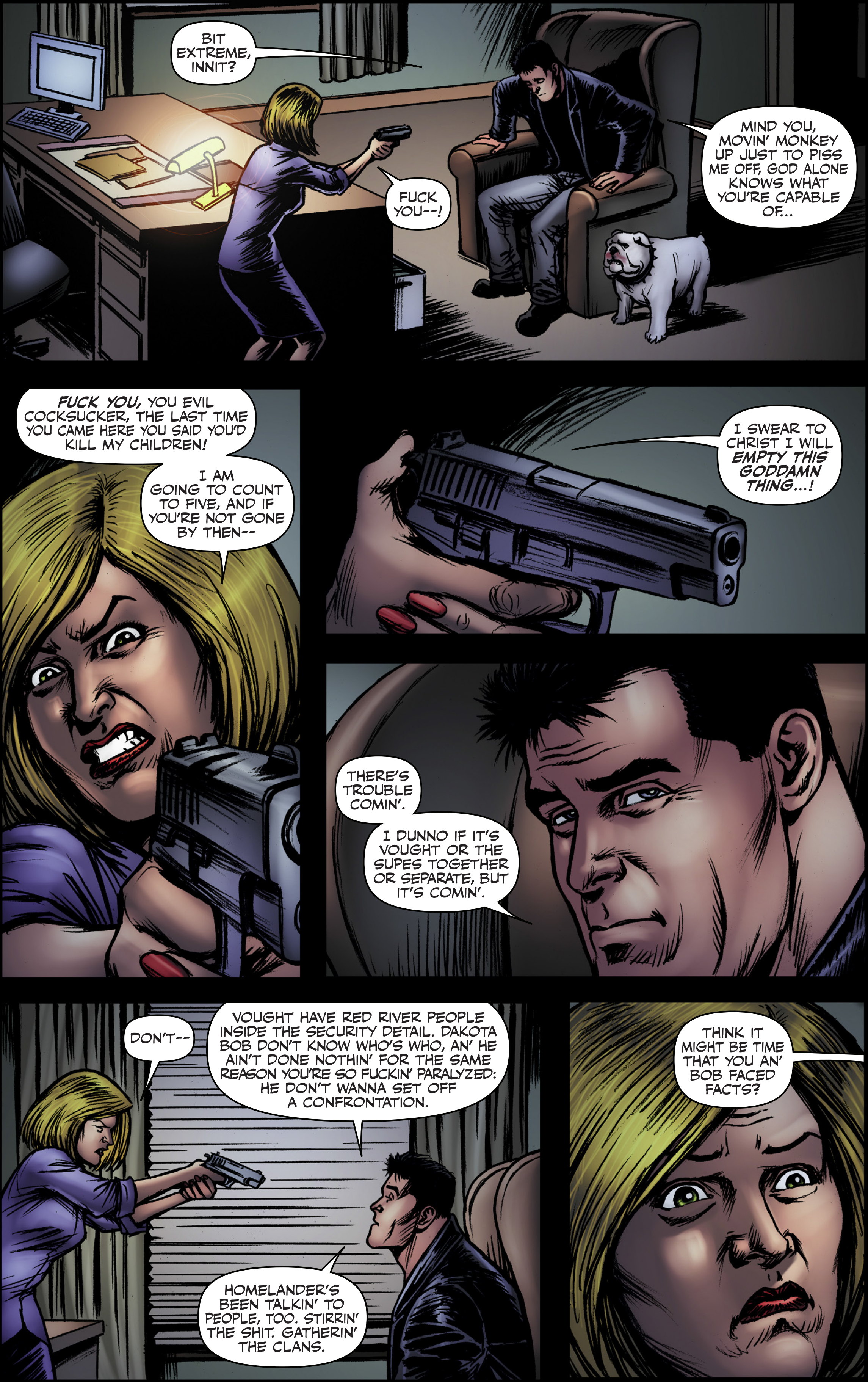
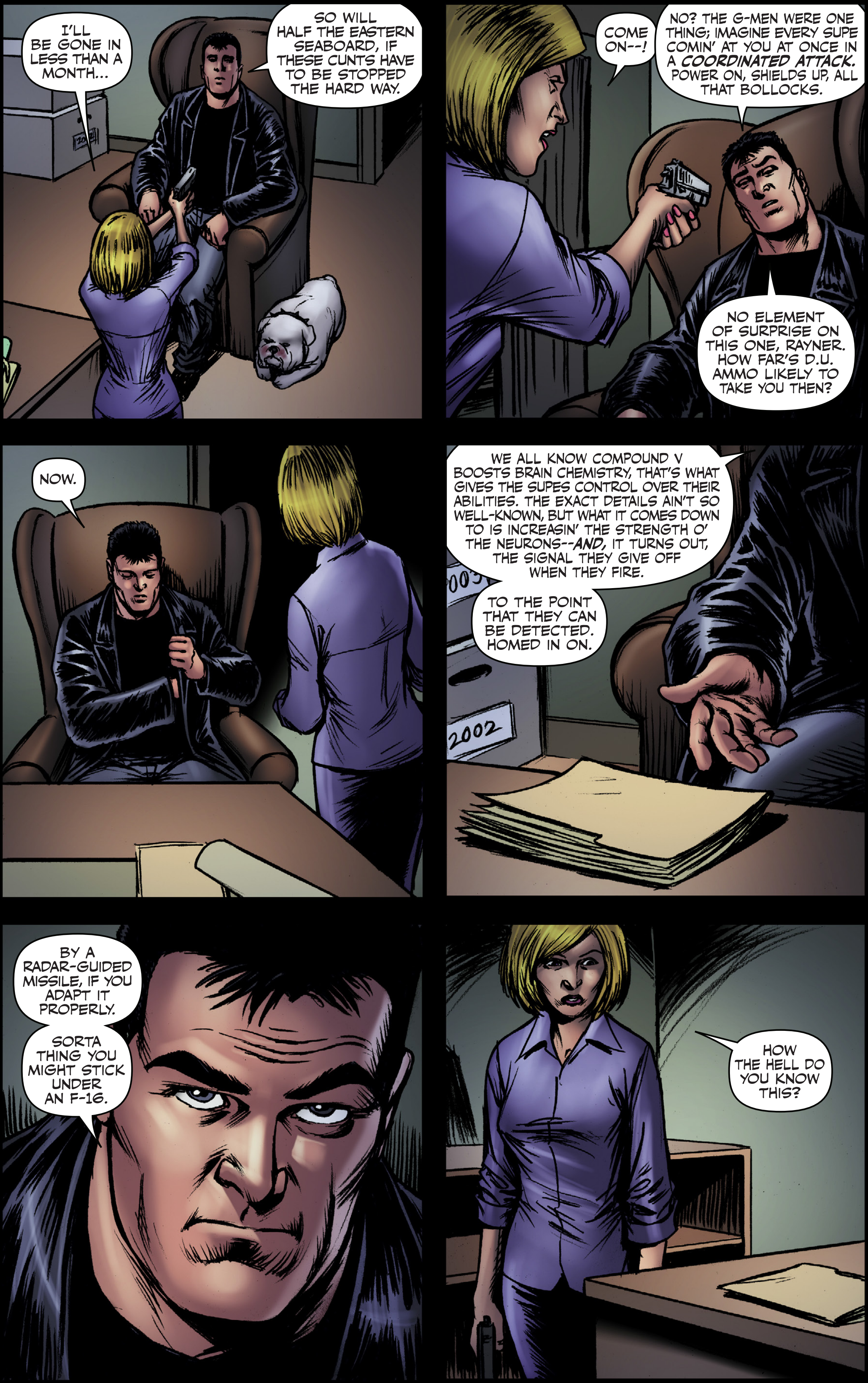
I HAD KENT'S PEOPLE WRITE A SIMULATION PROGRAM FOR ME. I HAVEN'T RUN IT YET.
IT HYPOTHESIZES A CONFLICT BETWEEN THE SEVEN AND THE BOYS. POINTS ARE AWARDED NOT JUST FOR EACH COMBATANT'S PHYSICAL STRENGTH, BUT ALSO FOR INTELLIGENCE, RESOURCEFULNESS ACCORDING TO WHAT WE'VE SEEN IN THE PAST, EXPERIENCE IN TACTICS--AND SO ON. THE LATTER ASPECTS BEING WHERE BUTCHER'S PEOPLE SCORE HIGHEST, OF COURSE.
YOU SEE, TO PUT IT IN THE CRUDEST TERMS, WE ALREADY KNOW WHO'LL WIN IN A FIGHT. WHAT THIS'LL TELL US IS THE PROBABLE OUTCOME OF THE CONFRONTATION WE'RE *ACTUALLY LIKELY TO SEE...*
POINTS MAKES IT SOUND LIKE SOME KIND OF ROLE PLAYING GAME. I THOUGHT THE GEEK MINDSET WAS NOT ONE TO BE INDULGED?
IT HAS ITS PLACE.
LOOK, I REALLY BELIEVE THIS IS WORTH DOING, THE PROGRAM IS EXHAUSTIVELY COMPREHENSIVE...
ALL RIGHT, RUN IT.
GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE ALREADY MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR AUTONOMY, MS. BRADLEY.
GOODNIGHT.
HUH.

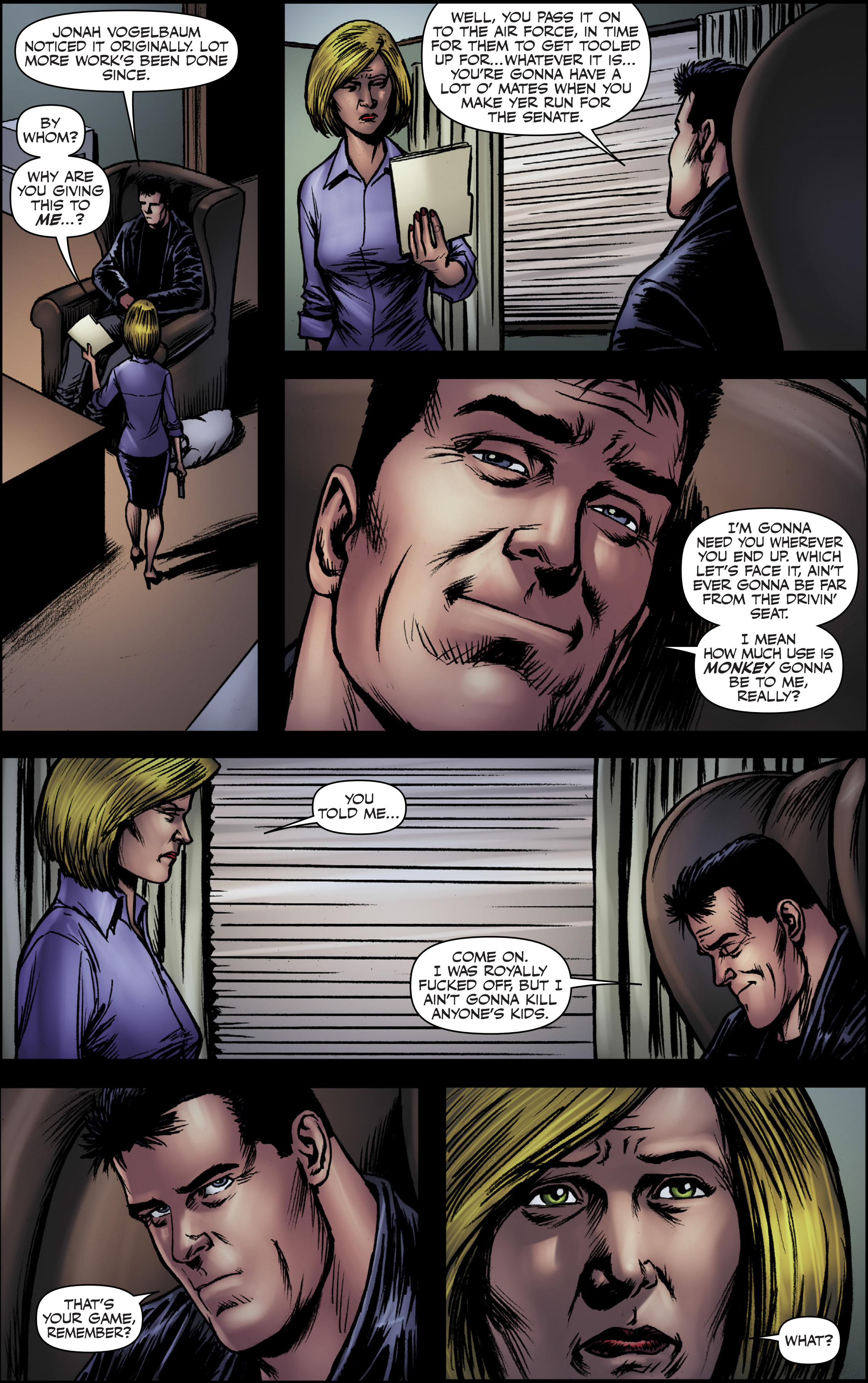

UH... *UUHHHH*...?
BLOODY HELL! *MONKEY!*
AAH--*NAAH*-- WH-WH-WH-WH--?
JESUS, WHAT A STATE TO GET INTO...!
I MEAN SHE SAID SHE *RESTRAINED YOU,* I DIDN'T THINK SHE'D TIED YOU DOWN WITH YER Y-FRONTS ROUND YER ANKLES AN' STUCK A DILDO UP YER ARSE...
IS... SHE...?
RELAX, SON, I MANAGED TO CALM HER DOWN. PUT ON ME CRAP YANK ACCENT AN' FLASHED ME I.D., TOLD HER I WAS SECRET SERVICE.
SHE'S IN THE BAR HAVIN' A BRANDY. DON'T WORRY, IT'S ON ME.
YOU'RE BLOODY LUCKY I CHANCED BY, REALLY. IF THIS EVER GOT OUT, WELL, I DREAD TO THINK WHAT'D HAPPEN.
WHAT DID YOU TELL HER...?

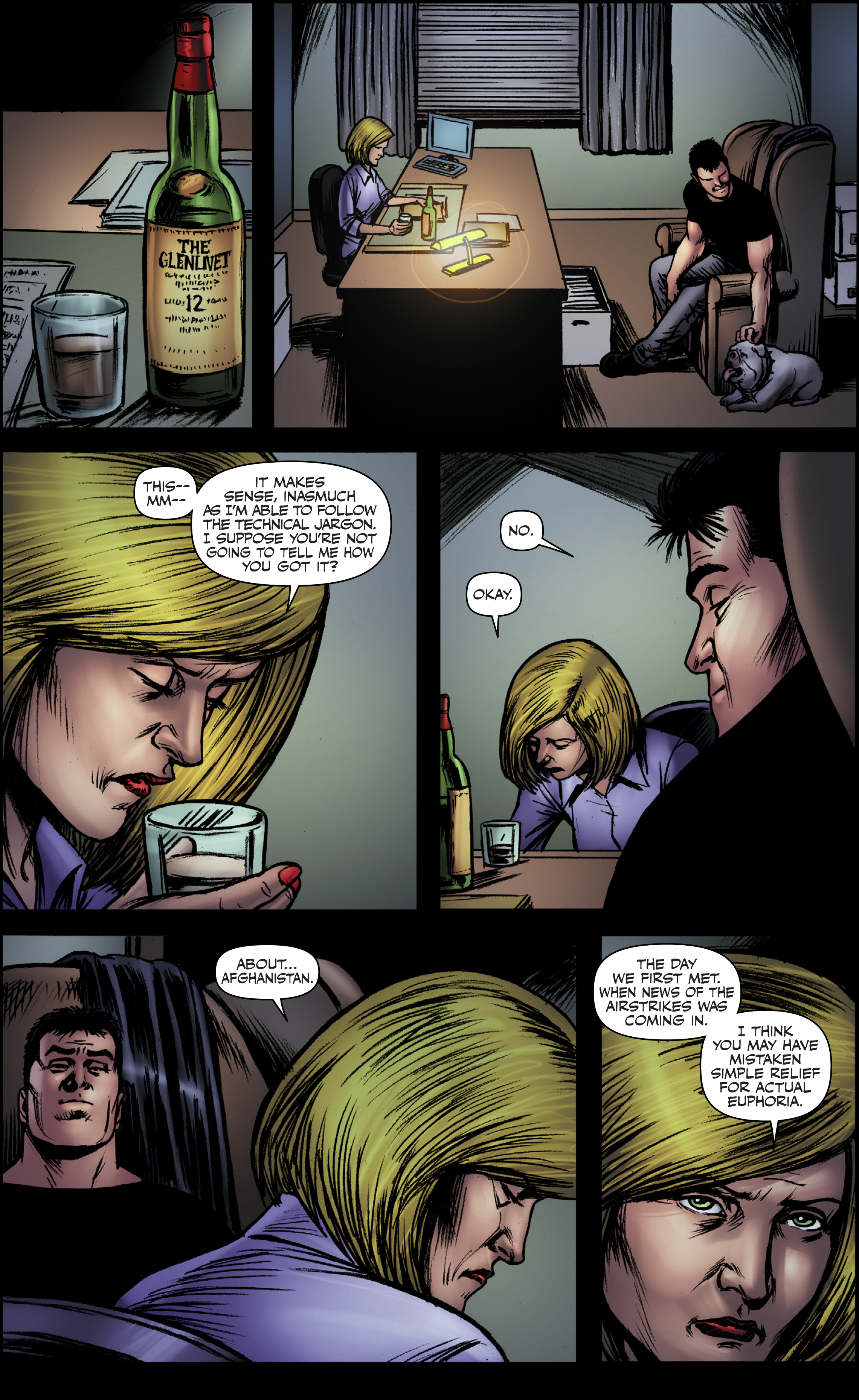

I SAID YOU'RE A REPUBLICAN SENATOR'S BROTHER WHO'S OFF HIS MEDS. YOU KEEP GETTIN' INTO TROUBLE AN' THE FAMILY HAS TO COVER IT UP.
BROKE YER MUM'S HEART, YOU HAVE. I MENTIONED THEY'RE NEVER DONE PRAYIN' FOR YOU, THAT ALWAYS GOES DOWN WELL WITH THE RED-STATERS.
LIBERAL MEDIA WOULD LOVE THIS... ADMINISTRATION COULD TAKE A SERIOUS HIT...I WASN'T HALF BAD, IF I SAY SO MESELF. I'LL SEND YOU THE TAPE FOR A LISTEN.
OH, GOD. WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?
WELL, LET'S GET RID O' THIS, BEFORE WE GO ANY FARTHER--
OOOOHH--!
THERE.
YOU'RE GONNA BE A GOOD LITTLE C.I.A. DIRECTOR, AIN'T YOU? THERE'S NOT GONNA BE ANY MORE OLD BOLLOCKS ABOUT EXPENSES OR ANY O' THAT.
...OKAY...
AN' YOU ***AIN'T*** GONNA COME INTO MY OFFICE AN' TRY AN' MAKE A CUNT O' ME AGAIN. THAT'S A DEFINITE NO-NO, MONKEY, THAT REALLY DID PISS ME OFF.
AS A MATTER O' FACT, JUST WHILE I'VE GOT YOU...TERROR?
WUFF!
TERROR, MATE.
FUCK IT...!

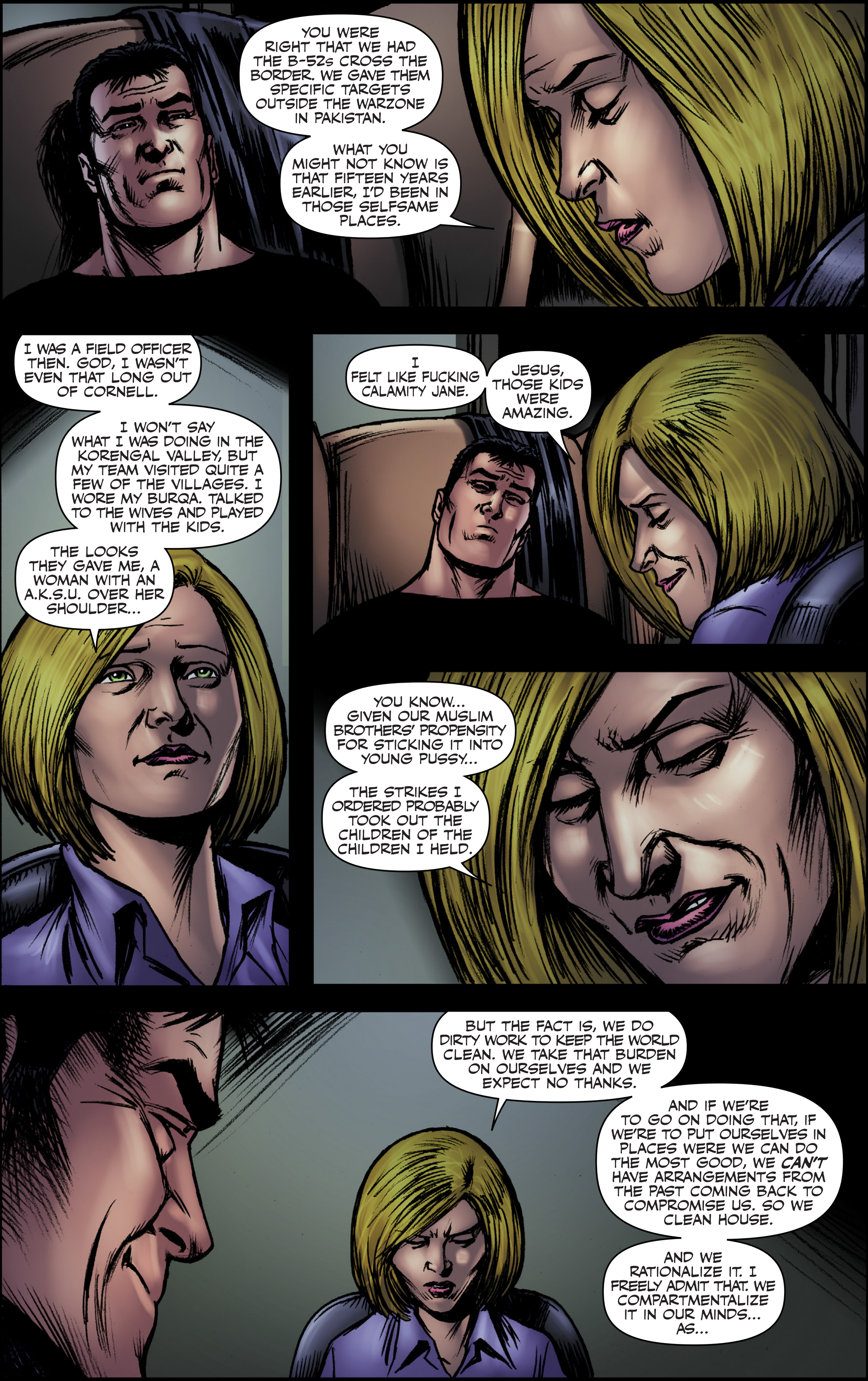

EVENIN', RAYNER.
WHAT THE FUCK ARE *YOU* DOING--
AH, YOU KNOW. JUST IN TOWN FOR SOME FUN AN' GAMES.
BUT THAT ALWAYS HAS TO STOP, SOONER OR LATER.
AN' YOU'VE GOTTA GET DOWN TO SERIOUS BUSINESS.
YOU GET OUT OF MY OFFICE RIGHT NOW OR I WILL FUCKING SHOOT YOU DEAD.

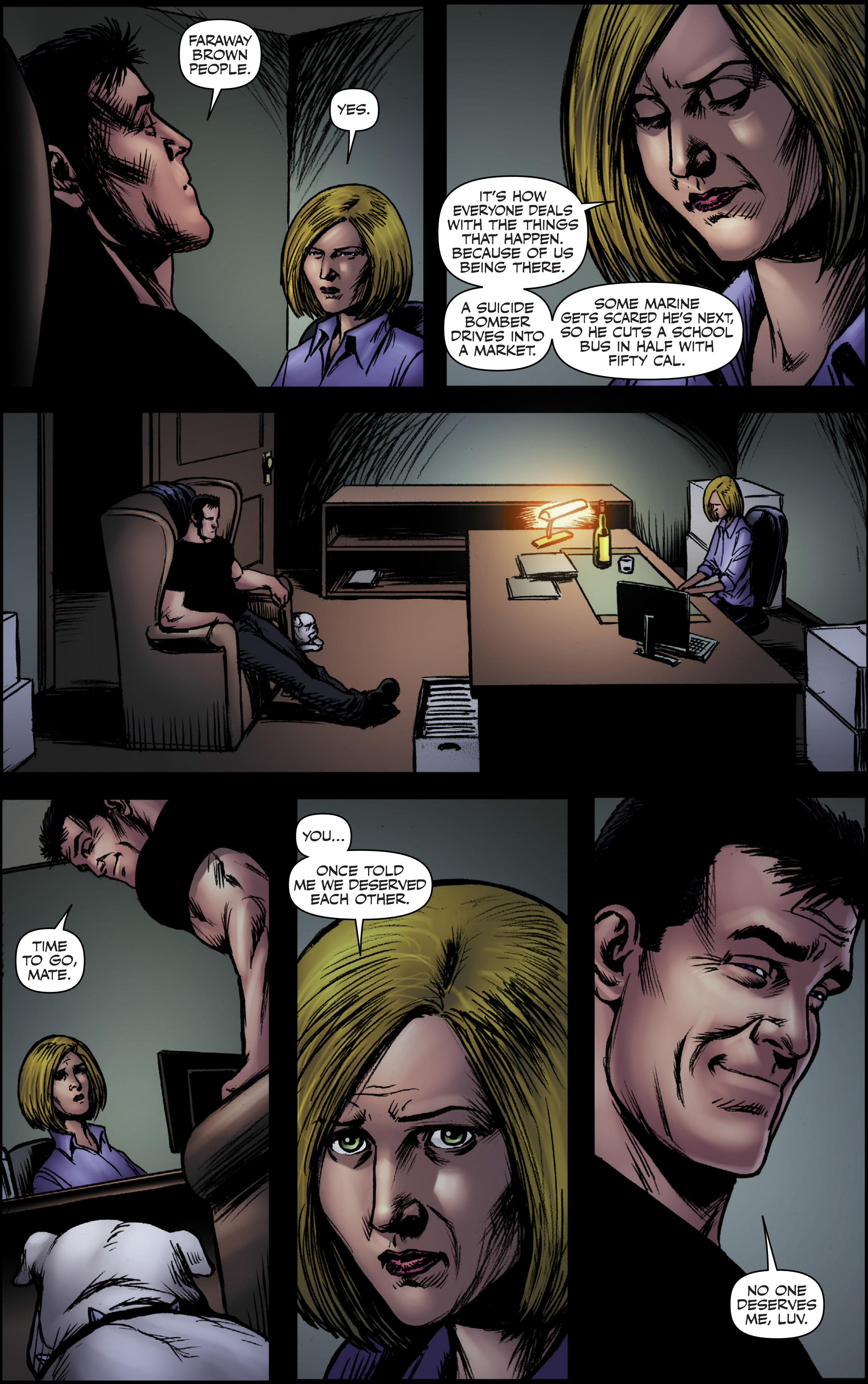

BIT EXTREME, INNIT?
FUCK YOU--!
MIND YOU, MOVIN' MONKEY UP JUST TO PISS ME OFF, GOD ALONE KNOWS WHAT YOU'RE CAPABLE OF...
FUCK YOU, YOU EVIL COCKSUCKER, THE LAST TIME YOU CAME HERE YOU SAID YOU'D KILL MY CHILDREN!
I AM GOING TO COUNT TO FIVE, AND IF YOU'RE NOT GONE BY THEN--
I SWEAR TO CHRIST I WILL *EMPTY THIS GODDAMN THING...!*
THERE'S TROUBLE COMIN'.
I DUNNO IF IT'S VOUGHT OR THE SUPES TOGETHER OR SEPARATE, BUT IT'S COMIN'.
DON'T--
VOUGHT HAVE RED RIVER PEOPLE INSIDE THE SECURITY DETAIL. DAKOTA BOB DON'T KNOW WHO'S WHO, AN' HE AIN'T DONE NOTHIN' FOR THE SAME REASON YOU'RE SO FUCKIN' PARALYZED: HE DON'T WANNA SET OFF A CONFRONTATION.
HOMELANDER'S BEEN TALKIN' TO PEOPLE, TOO. STIRRIN' THE SHIT. GATHERIN' THE CLANS.
THINK IT MIGHT BE TIME THAT YOU AN' BOB FACED FACTS?

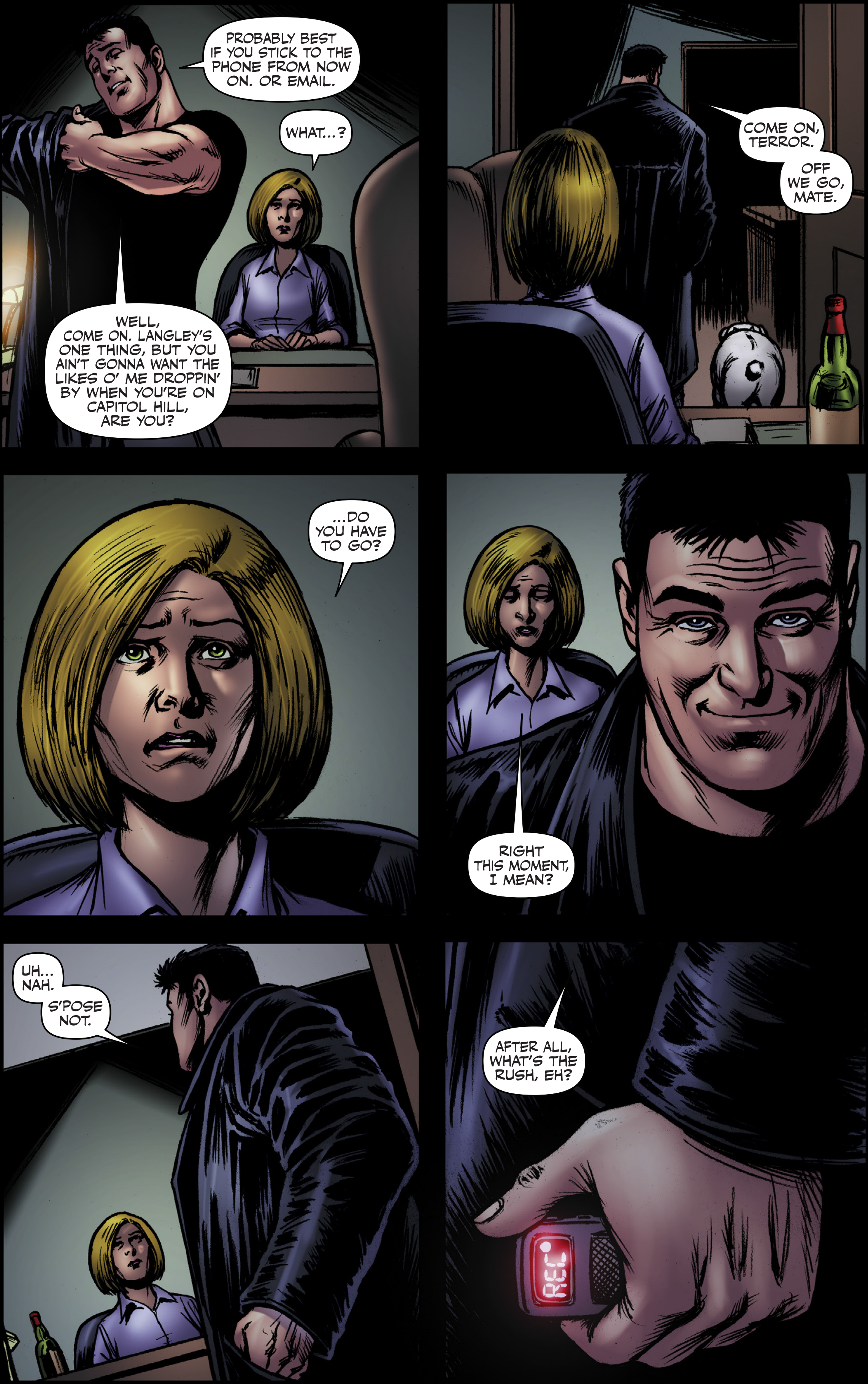

I'LL BE GONE IN LESS THAN A MONTH...
SO WILL HALF THE EASTERN SEABOARD, IF THESE CUNTS HAVE TO BE STOPPED THE HARD WAY.
2002
COME ON--!
NO? THE G-MEN WERE ONE THING; IMAGINE EVERY SUPE COMIN' AT YOU AT ONCE IN A ***COORDINATED ATTACK.*** POWER ON, SHIELDS UP, ALL THAT BOLLOCKS.
NO ELEMENT OF SURPRISE ON THIS ONE, RAYNER. HOW FAR'S D.U. AMMO LIKELY TO TAKE YOU THEN?
NOW.
WE ALL KNOW COMPOUND V BOOSTS BRAIN CHEMISTRY, THAT'S WHAT GIVES THE SUPES CONTROL OVER THEIR ABILITIES. THE EXACT DETAILS AIN'T SO WELL-KNOWN, BUT WHAT IT COMES DOWN TO IS INCREASIN' THE STRENGTH O' THE NEURONS--***AND,*** IT TURNS OUT, THE SIGNAL THEY GIVE OFF WHEN THEY FIRE.
TO THE POINT THAT THEY CAN BE DETECTED. HOMED IN ON.
2002
BY A RADAR-GUIDED MISSILE, IF YOU ADAPT IT PROPERLY.
SORTA THING YOU MIGHT STICK UNDER AN F-16.
HOW THE HELL DO YOU KNOW THIS?

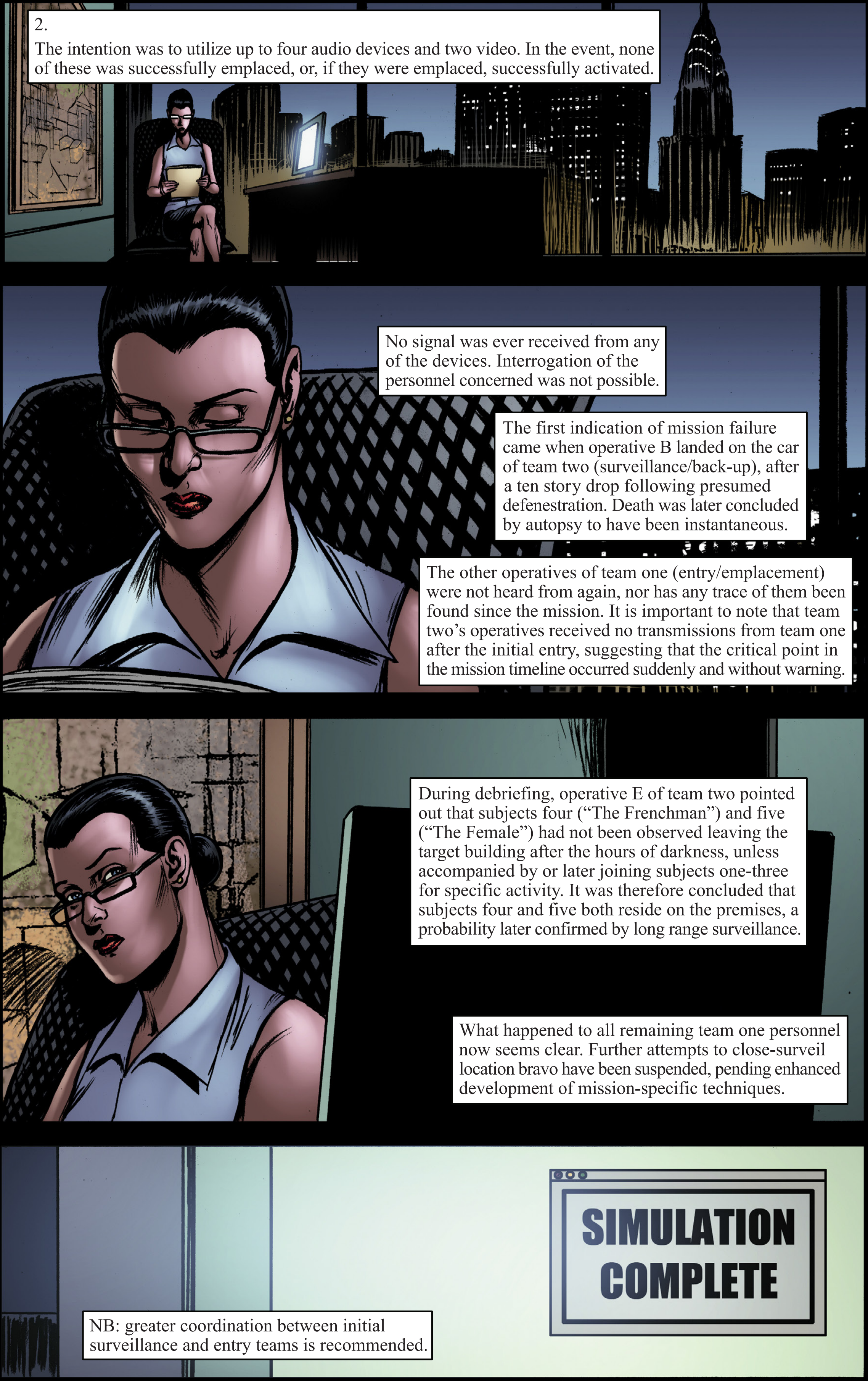

JONAH VOGELBAUM NOTICED IT ORIGINALLY. LOT MORE WORK'S BEEN DONE SINCE.
BY WHOM?
WHY ARE YOU GIVING THIS TO *ME*...?
WELL, YOU PASS IT ON TO THE AIR FORCE, IN TIME FOR THEM TO GET TOOLED UP FOR...WHATEVER IT IS... YOU'RE GONNA HAVE A LOT O' MATES WHEN YOU MAKE YER RUN FOR THE SENATE.
I'M GONNA NEED YOU WHEREVER YOU END UP. WHICH LET'S FACE IT, AIN'T EVER GONNA BE FAR FROM THE DRIVIN' SEAT.
I MEAN HOW MUCH USE IS *MONKEY* GONNA BE TO ME, REALLY?
YOU TOLD ME...
COME ON. I WAS ROYALLY FUCKED OFF, BUT I AIN'T GONNA KILL ANYONE'S KIDS.
THAT'S YOUR GAME, REMEMBER?
WHAT?

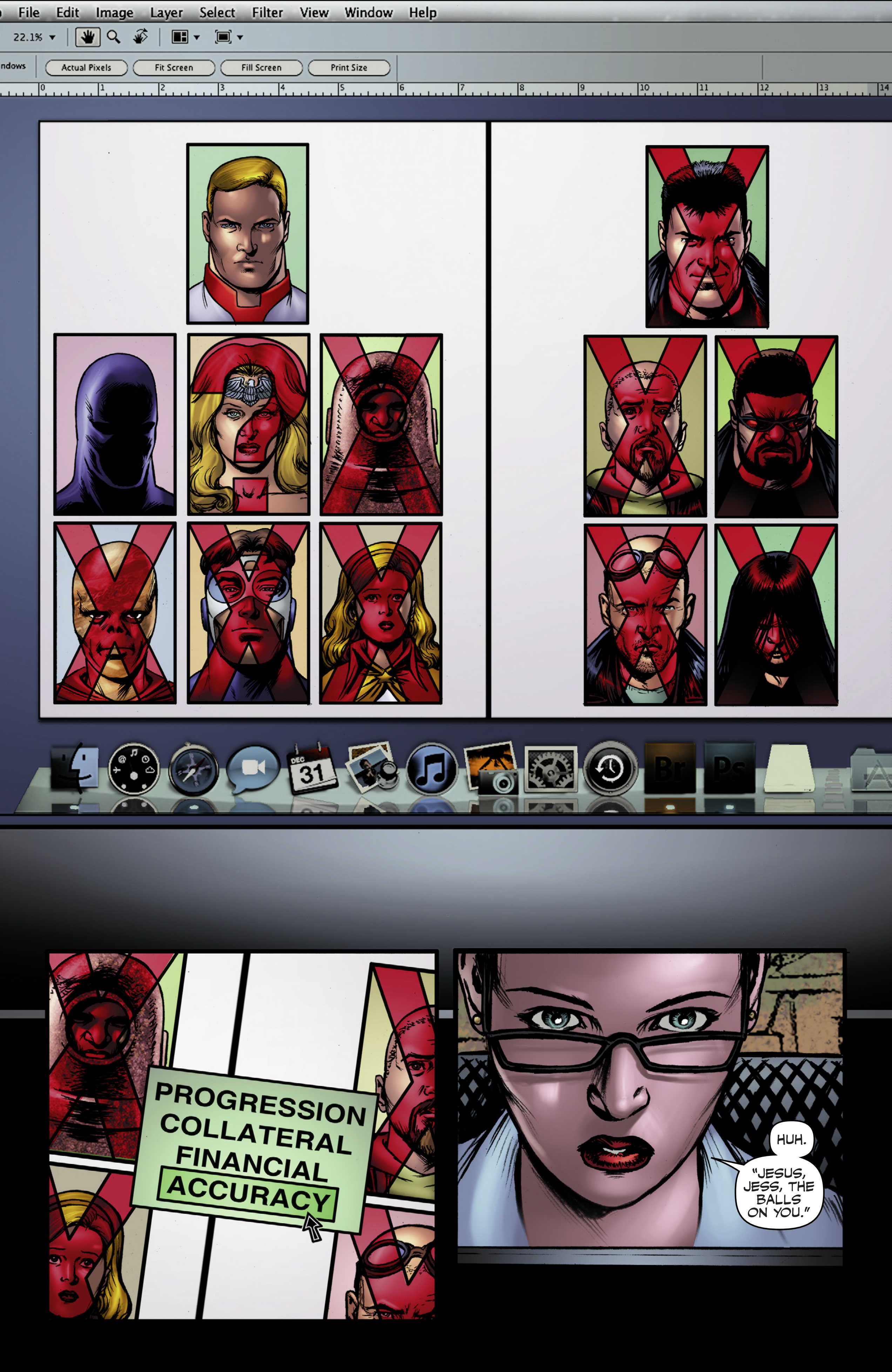

THE GLENLIVET
12
THIS-- MM--
IT MAKES SENSE, INASMUCH AS I'M ABLE TO FOLLOW THE TECHNICAL JARGON. I SUPPOSE YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TELL ME HOW YOU GOT IT?
NO.
OKAY.
ABOUT... AFGHANISTAN.
THE DAY WE FIRST MET. WHEN NEWS OF THE AIRSTRIKES WAS COMING IN.
I THINK YOU MAY HAVE MISTAKEN SIMPLE RELIEF FOR ACTUAL EUPHORIA.


YOU WERE RIGHT THAT WE HAD THE B-52s CROSS THE BORDER. WE GAVE THEM SPECIFIC TARGETS OUTSIDE THE WARZONE IN PAKISTAN.
WHAT YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW IS THAT FIFTEEN YEARS EARLIER, I'D BEEN IN THOSE SELFSAME PLACES.
I WAS A FIELD OFFICER THEN. GOD, I WASN'T EVEN THAT LONG OUT OF CORNELL.
I WON'T SAY WHAT I WAS DOING IN THE KORENGAL VALLEY, BUT MY TEAM VISITED QUITE A FEW OF THE VILLAGES. I WORE MY BURQA. TALKED TO THE WIVES AND PLAYED WITH THE KIDS.
THE LOOKS THEY GAVE ME, A WOMAN WITH AN A.K.S.U. OVER HER SHOULDER...
I FELT LIKE FUCKING CALAMITY JANE.
JESUS, THOSE KIDS WERE AMAZING.
YOU KNOW... GIVEN OUR MUSLIM BROTHERS' PROPENSITY FOR STICKING IT INTO YOUNG PUSSY...
THE STRIKES I ORDERED PROBABLY TOOK OUT THE CHILDREN OF THE CHILDREN I HELD.
BUT THE FACT IS, WE DO DIRTY WORK TO KEEP THE WORLD CLEAN. WE TAKE THAT BURDEN ON OURSELVES AND WE EXPECT NO THANKS.
AND IF WE'RE TO GO ON DOING THAT, IF WE'RE TO PUT OURSELVES IN PLACES WERE WE CAN DO THE MOST GOOD, WE *CAN'T* HAVE ARRANGEMENTS FROM THE PAST COMING BACK TO COMPROMISE US. SO WE CLEAN HOUSE.
AND WE RATIONALIZE IT. I FREELY ADMIT THAT. WE COMPARTMENTALIZE IT IN OUR MINDS... AS...


FARAWAY BROWN PEOPLE.
YES.
IT'S HOW EVERYONE DEALS WITH THE THINGS THAT HAPPEN. BECAUSE OF US BEING THERE.
A SUICIDE BOMBER DRIVES INTO A MARKET.
SOME MARINE GETS SCARED HE'S NEXT, SO HE CUTS A SCHOOL BUS IN HALF WITH FIFTY CAL.
TIME TO GO, MATE.
YOU...
ONCE TOLD ME WE DESERVED EACH OTHER.
NO ONE DESERVES ME, LUV.


PROBABLY BEST IF YOU STICK TO THE PHONE FROM NOW ON. OR EMAIL.
WHAT...?
WELL, COME ON. LANGLEY'S ONE THING, BUT YOU AIN'T GONNA WANT THE LIKES O' ME DROPPIN' BY WHEN YOU'RE ON CAPITOL HILL, ARE YOU?
COME ON, TERROR.
OFF WE GO, MATE.
...DO YOU HAVE TO GO?
RIGHT THIS MOMENT, I MEAN?
UH... NAH.
S'POSE NOT.
AFTER ALL, WHAT'S THE RUSH, EH?
REC


2.
The intention was to utilize up to four audio devices and two video. In the event, none of these was successfully emplaced, or, if they were emplaced, successfully activated.
No signal was ever received from any of the devices. Interrogation of the personnel concerned was not possible.
The first indication of mission failure came when operative B landed on the car of team two (surveillance/back-up), after a ten story drop following presumed defenestration. Death was later concluded by autopsy to have been instantaneous.
The other operatives of team one (entry/emplacement) were not heard from again, nor has any trace of them been found since the mission. It is important to note that team two's operatives received no transmissions from team one after the initial entry, suggesting that the critical point in the mission timeline occurred suddenly and without warning.
During debriefing, operative E of team two pointed out that subjects four ("The Frenchman") and five ("The Female") had not been observed leaving the target building after the hours of darkness, unless accompanied by or later joining subjects one-three for specific activity. It was therefore concluded that subjects four and five both reside on the premises, a probability later confirmed by long range surveillance.
What happened to all remaining team one personnel now seems clear. Further attempts to close-surveil location bravo have been suspended, pending enhanced development of mission-specific techniques.
SIMULATION COMPLETE
NB: greater coordination between initial surveillance and entry teams is recommended.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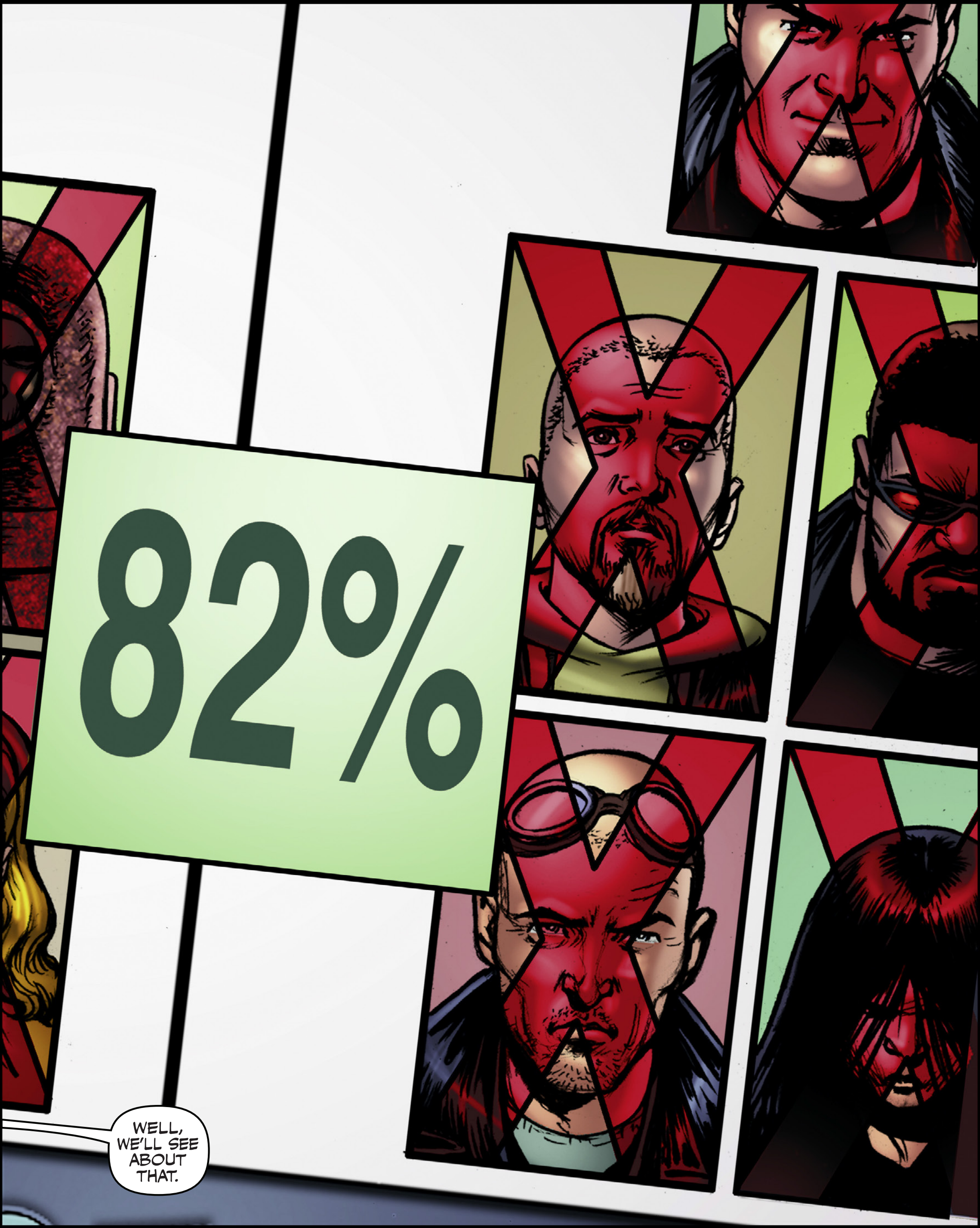
PROGRESSION COLLATERAL FINANCIAL ACCURACY
HUH.
"JESUS, JESS, THE BALLS ON YOU."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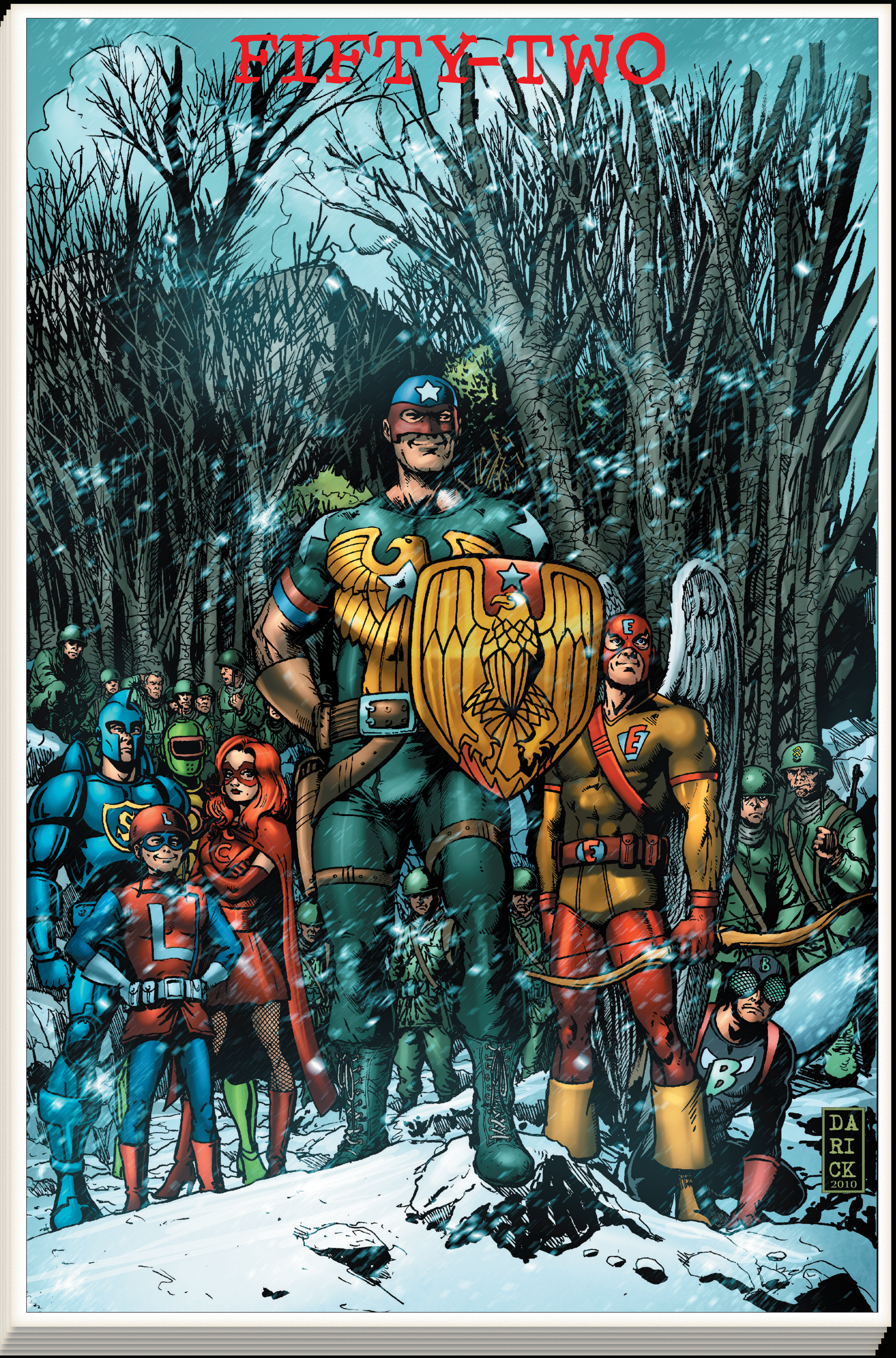
WELL, WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT.

PROPER PREPARATION AND PLANNING

conclusion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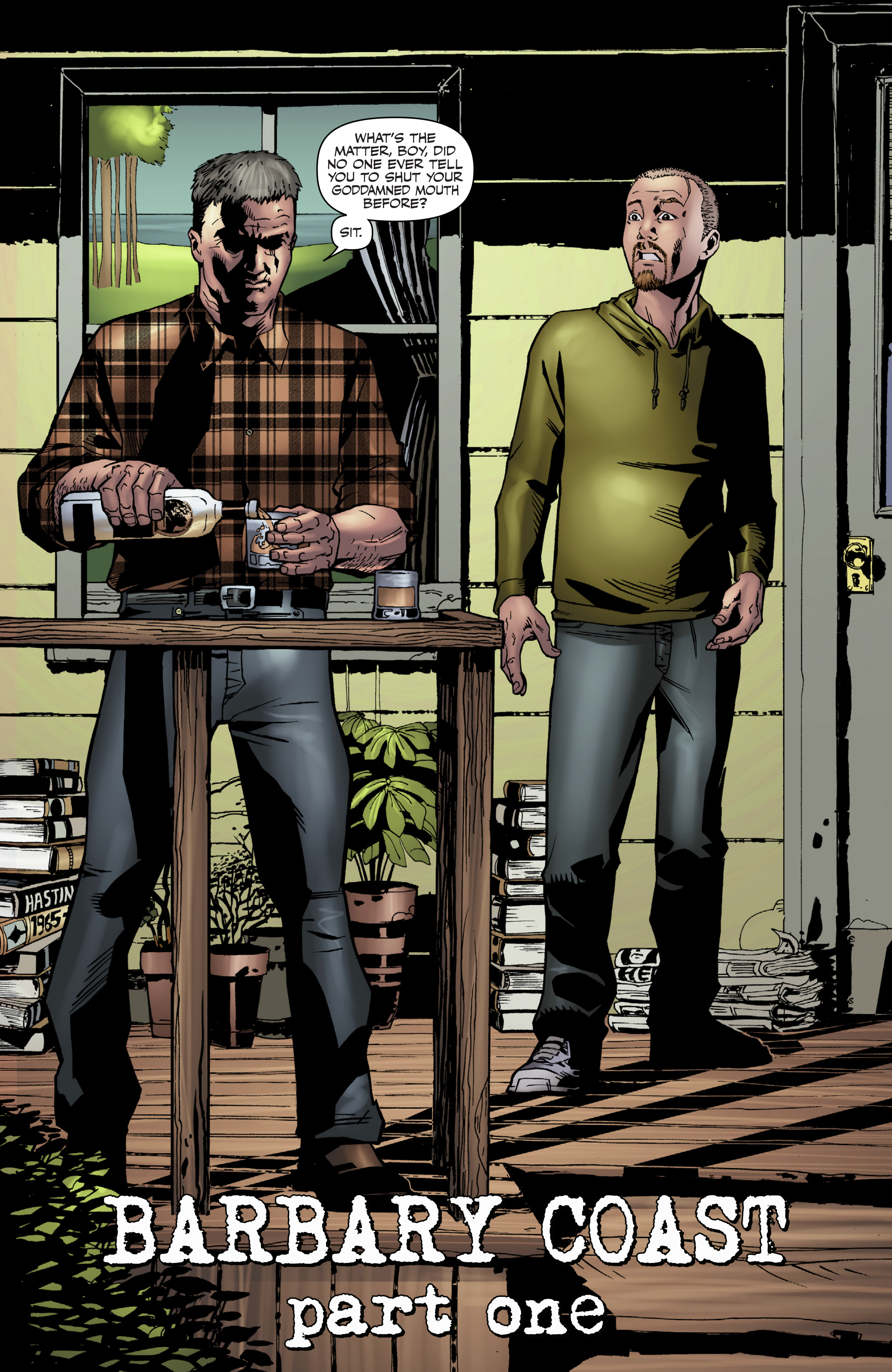
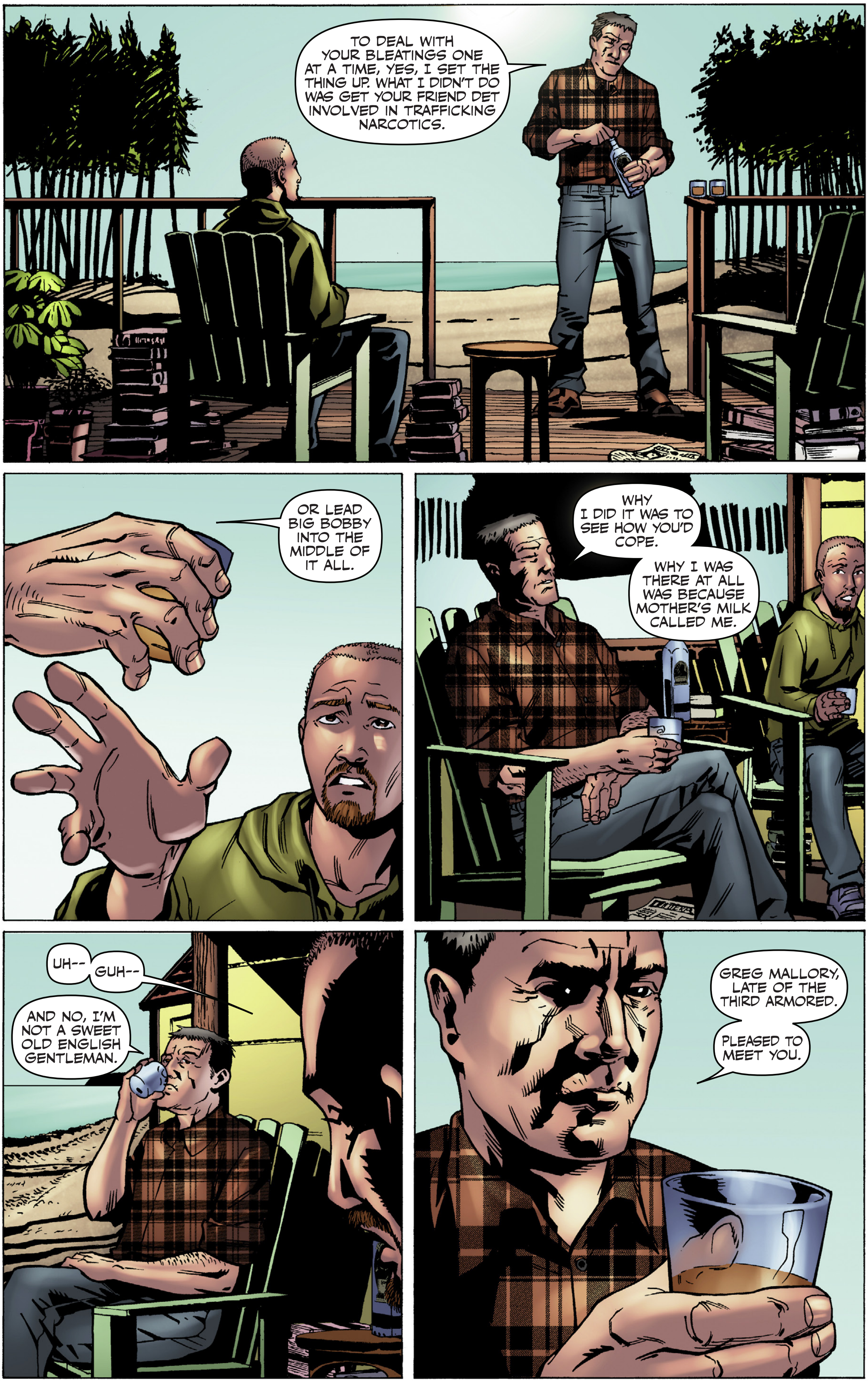
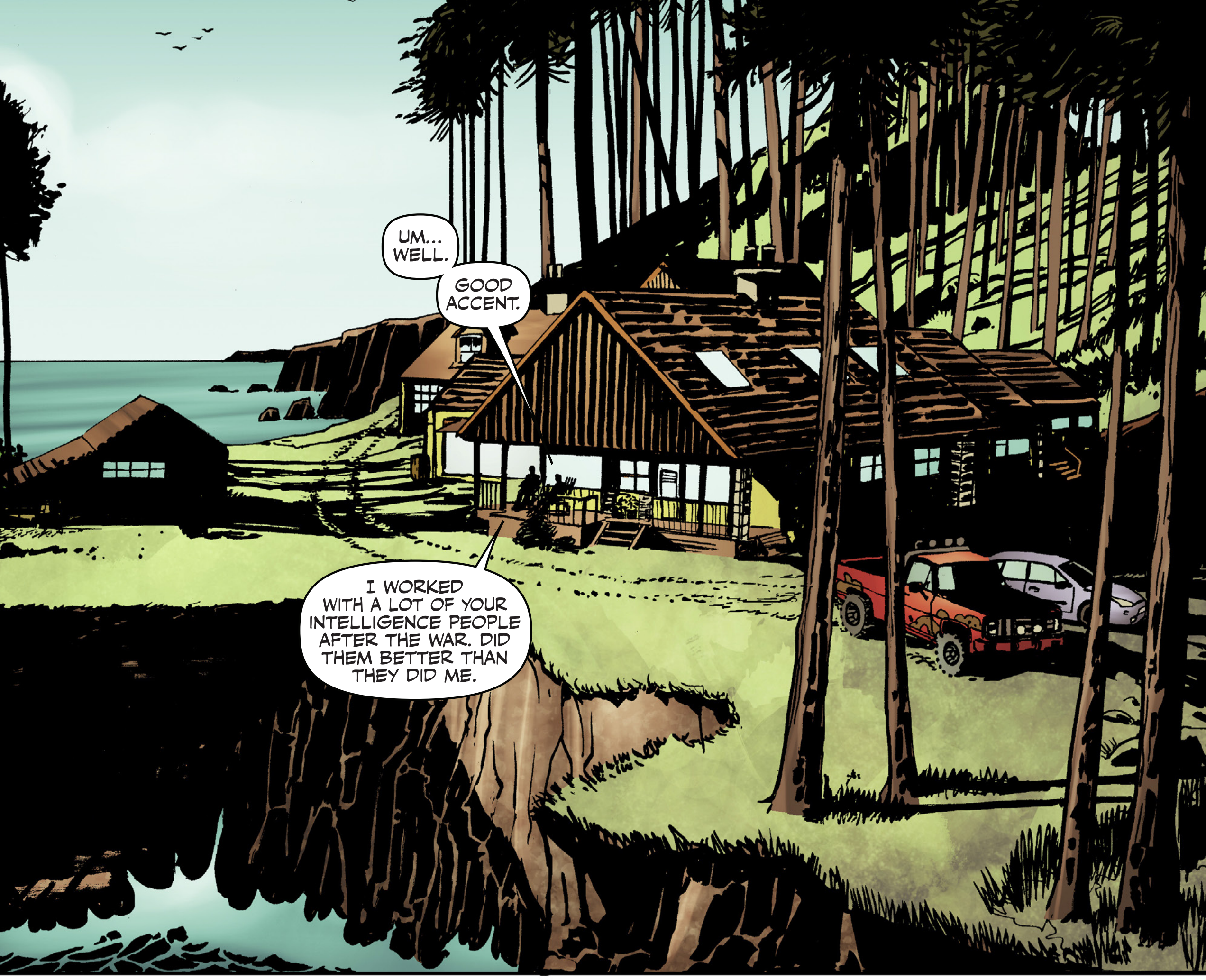
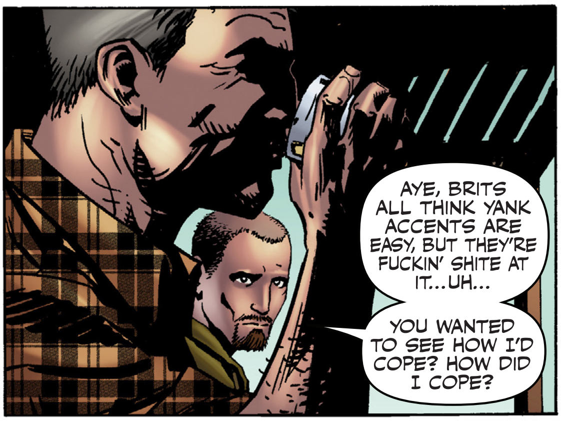

WHAT'S THE MATTER, BOY, DID NO ONE EVER TELL YOU TO SHUT YOUR GODDAMNED MOUTH BEFORE?
SIT.
HASTIN
1965

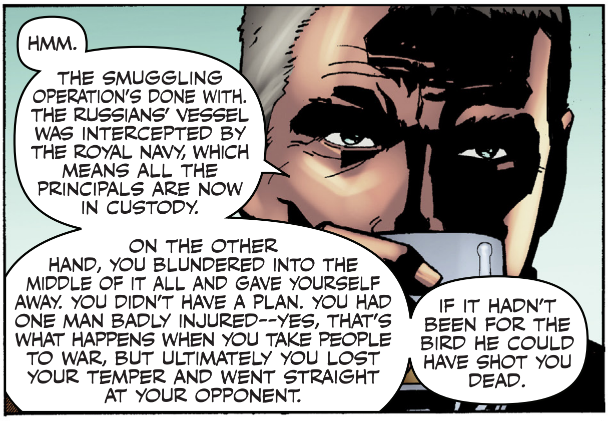
BARBARY COAST

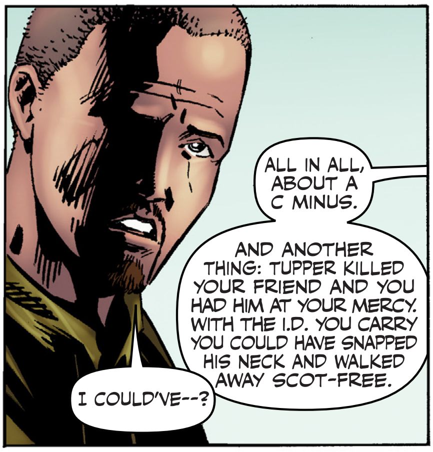
part one

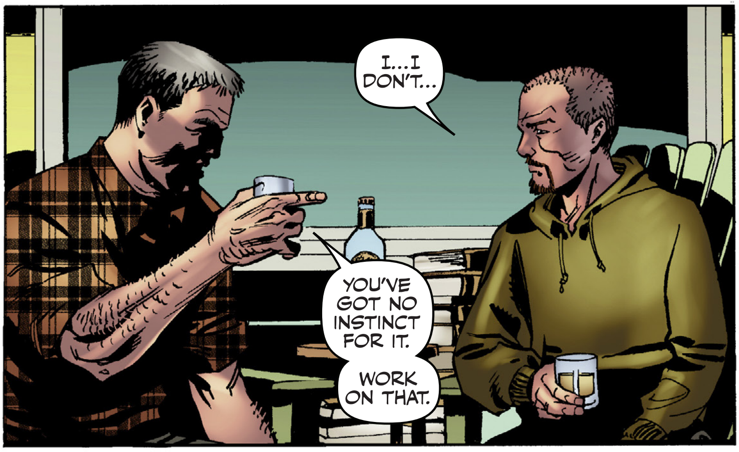

TO DEAL WITH YOUR BLEATINGS ONE AT A TIME, YES, I SET THE THING UP. WHAT I DIDN'T DO WAS GET YOUR FRIEND DET INVOLVED IN TRAFFICKING NARCOTICS.
OR LEAD BIG BOBBY INTO THE MIDDLE OF IT ALL.
WHY I DID IT WAS TO SEE HOW YOU'D COPE.
WHY I WAS THERE AT ALL WAS BECAUSE MOTHER'S MILK CALLED ME.
UH--
GUH--
AND NO, I'M NOT A SWEET OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN.
GREG MALLORY, LATE OF THE THIRD ARMORED.
PLEASED TO MEET YOU.

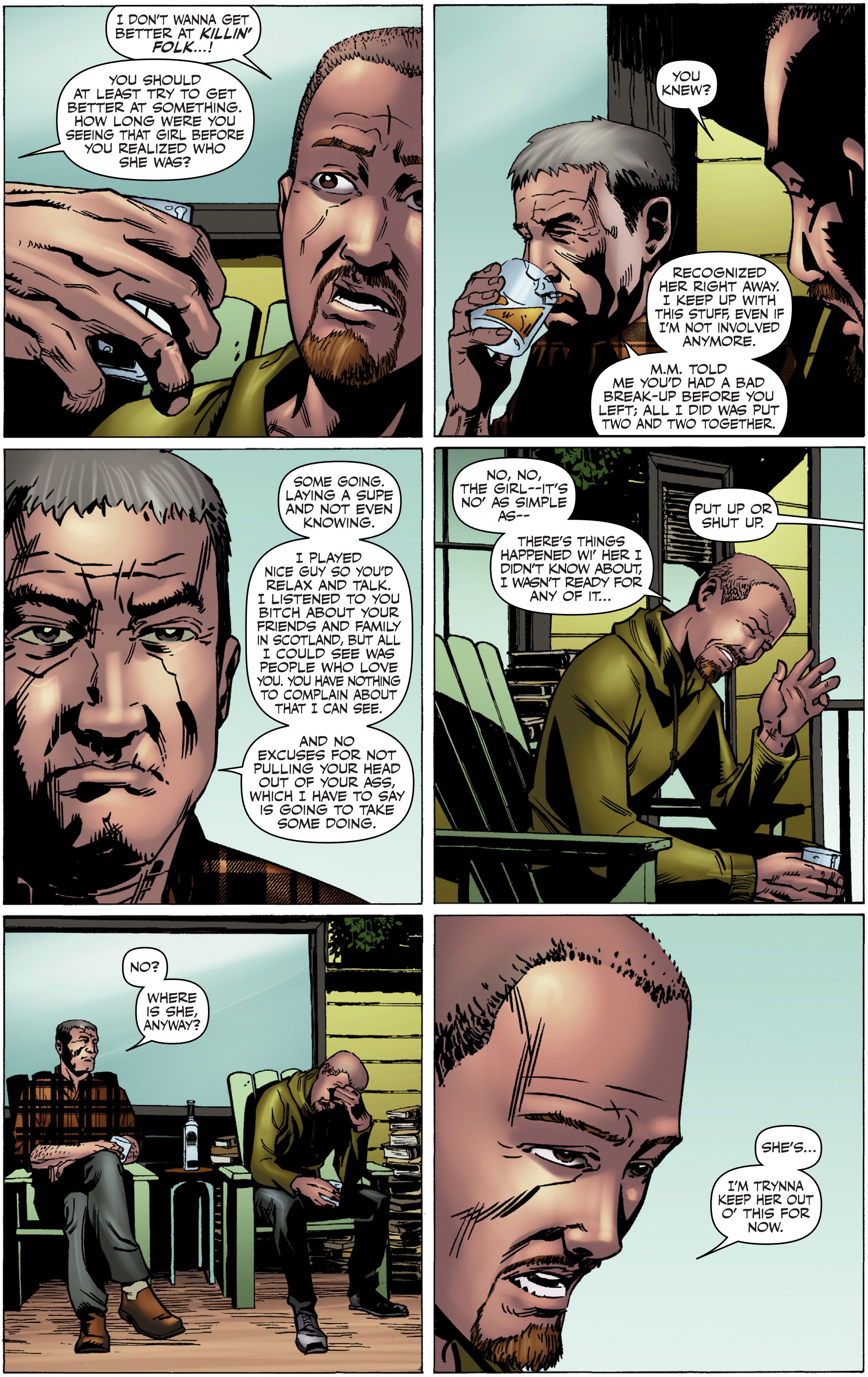

UM... WELL.
GOOD ACCENT.
I WORKED WITH A LOT OF YOUR INTELLIGENCE PEOPLE AFTER THE WAR. DID THEM BETTER THAN THEY DID ME.

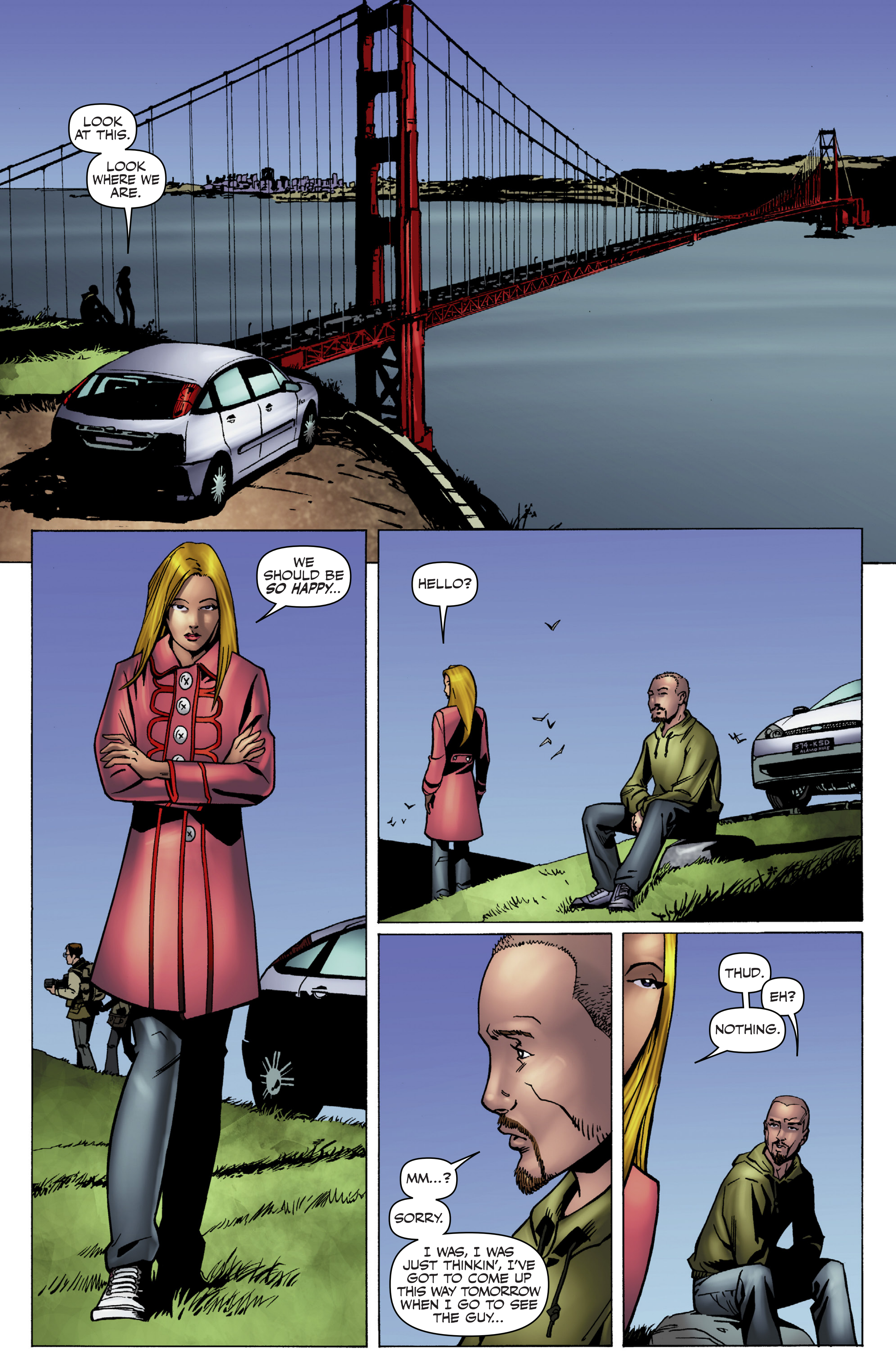

AYE, BRITS ALL THINK YANK ACCENTS ARE EASY, BUT THEY'RE FUCKIN' SHITE AT IT...UH...
YOU WANTED TO SEE HOW I'D COPE? HOW DID I COPE?

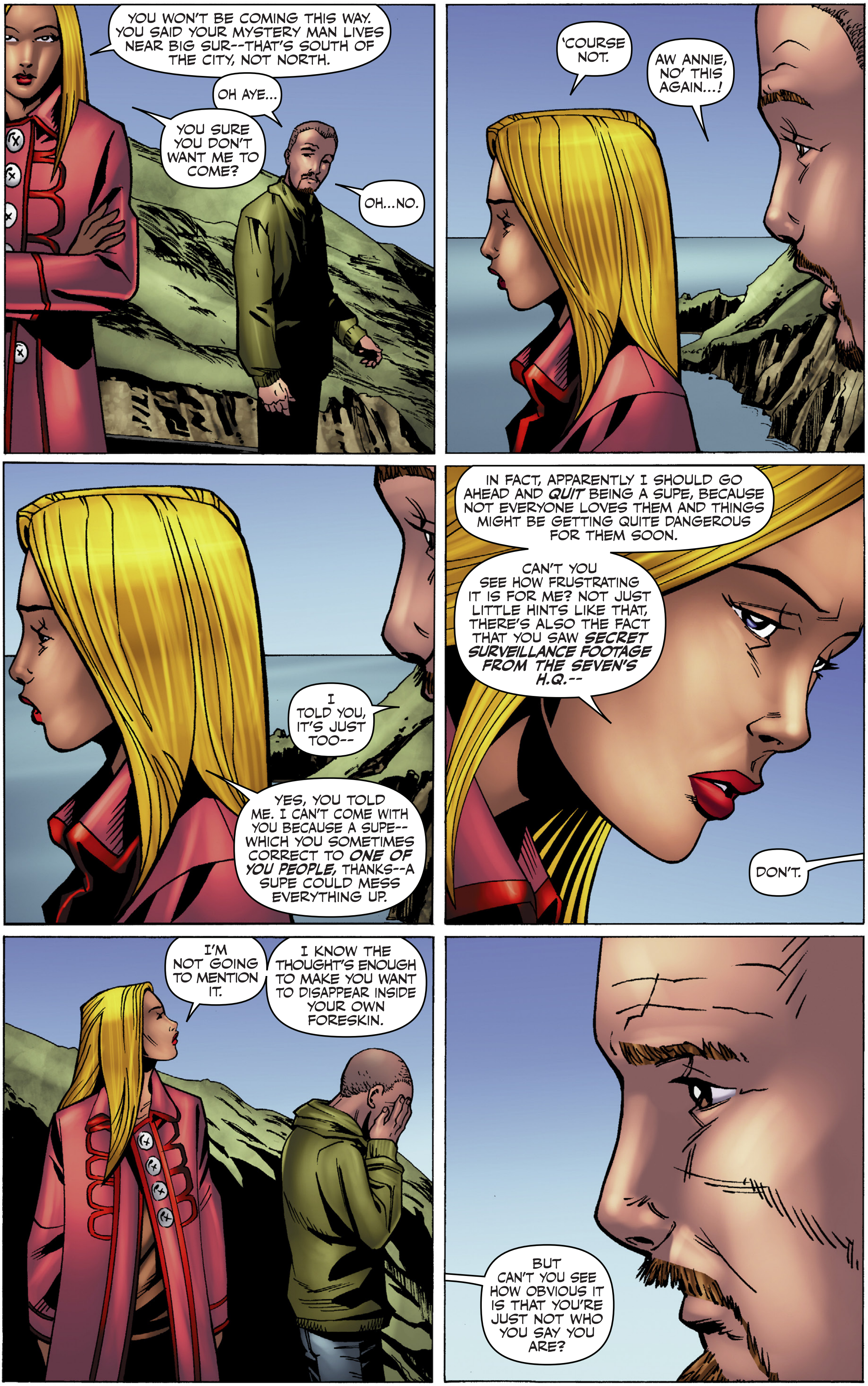

HMM.
THE SMUGGLING OPERATION'S DONE WITH. THE RUSSIANS' VESSEL WAS INTERCEPTED BY THE ROYAL NAVY, WHICH MEANS ALL THE PRINCIPALS ARE NOW IN CUSTODY.
ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU BLUNDERED INTO THE MIDDLE OF IT ALL AND GAVE YOURSELF AWAY. YOU DIDN'T HAVE A PLAN. YOU HAD ONE MAN BADLY INJURED--YES, THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU TAKE PEOPLE TO WAR, BUT ULTIMATELY YOU LOST YOUR TEMPER AND WENT STRAIGHT AT YOUR OPPONENT.
IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR THE BIRD HE COULD HAVE SHOT YOU DEAD.

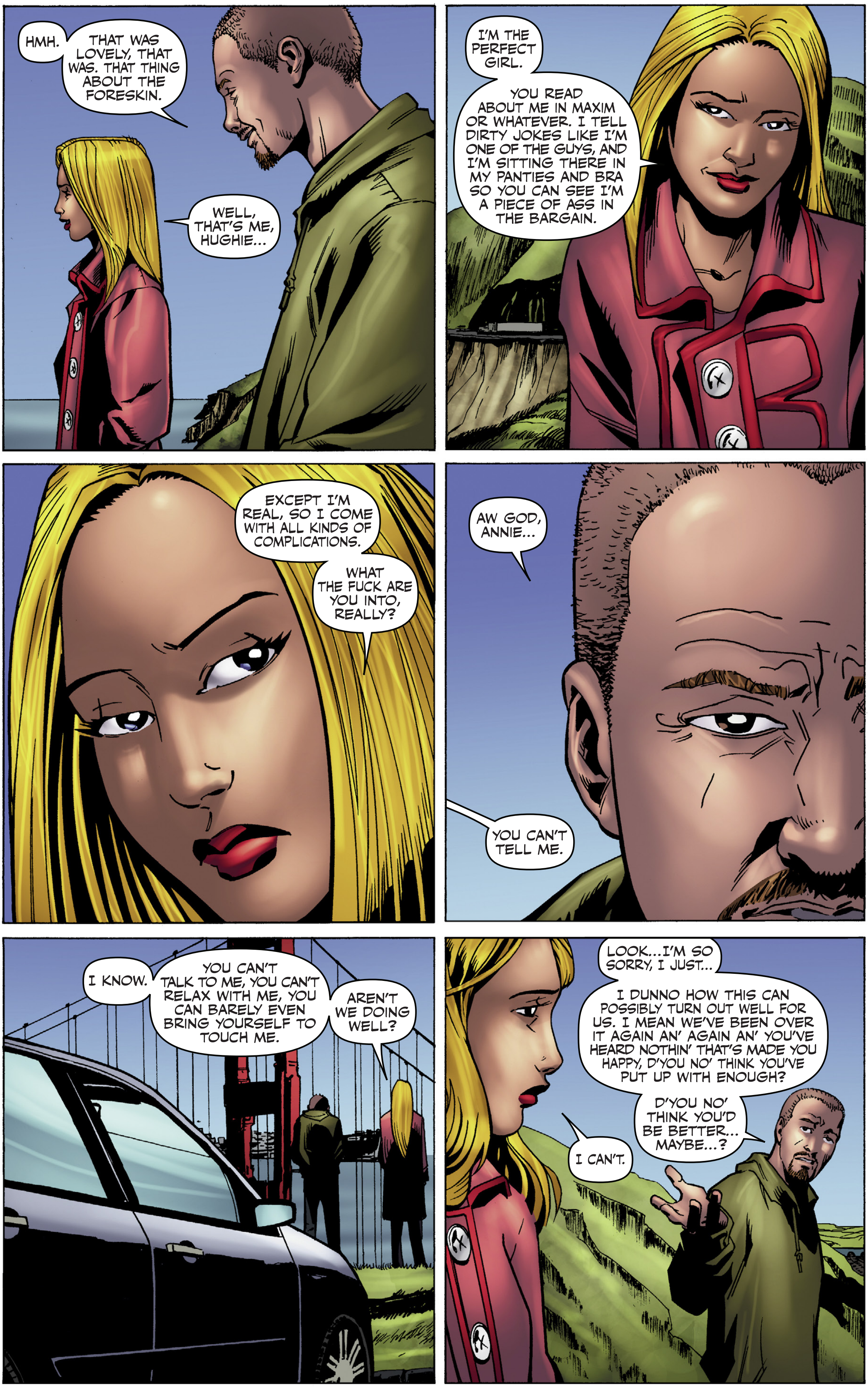

ALL IN ALL, ABOUT A C MINUS.
AND ANOTHER THING: TUPPER KILLED YOUR FRIEND AND YOU HAD HIM AT YOUR MERCY. WITH THE I.D. YOU CARRY YOU COULD HAVE SNAPPED HIS NECK AND WALKED AWAY SCOT-FREE.
I COULD'VE--?

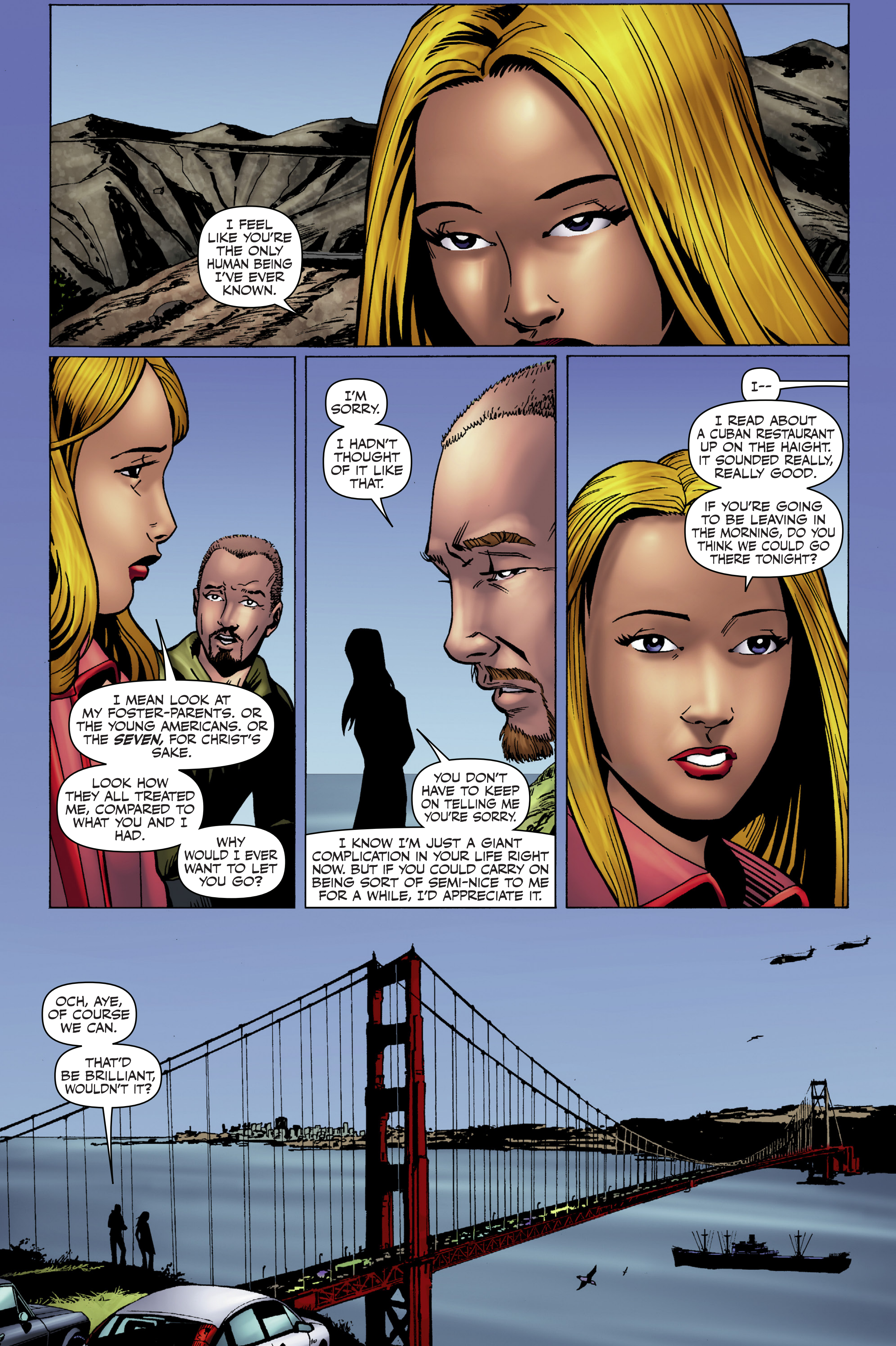

I...I DON'T...
YOU'VE GOT NO INSTINCT FOR IT.
WORK ON THAT.

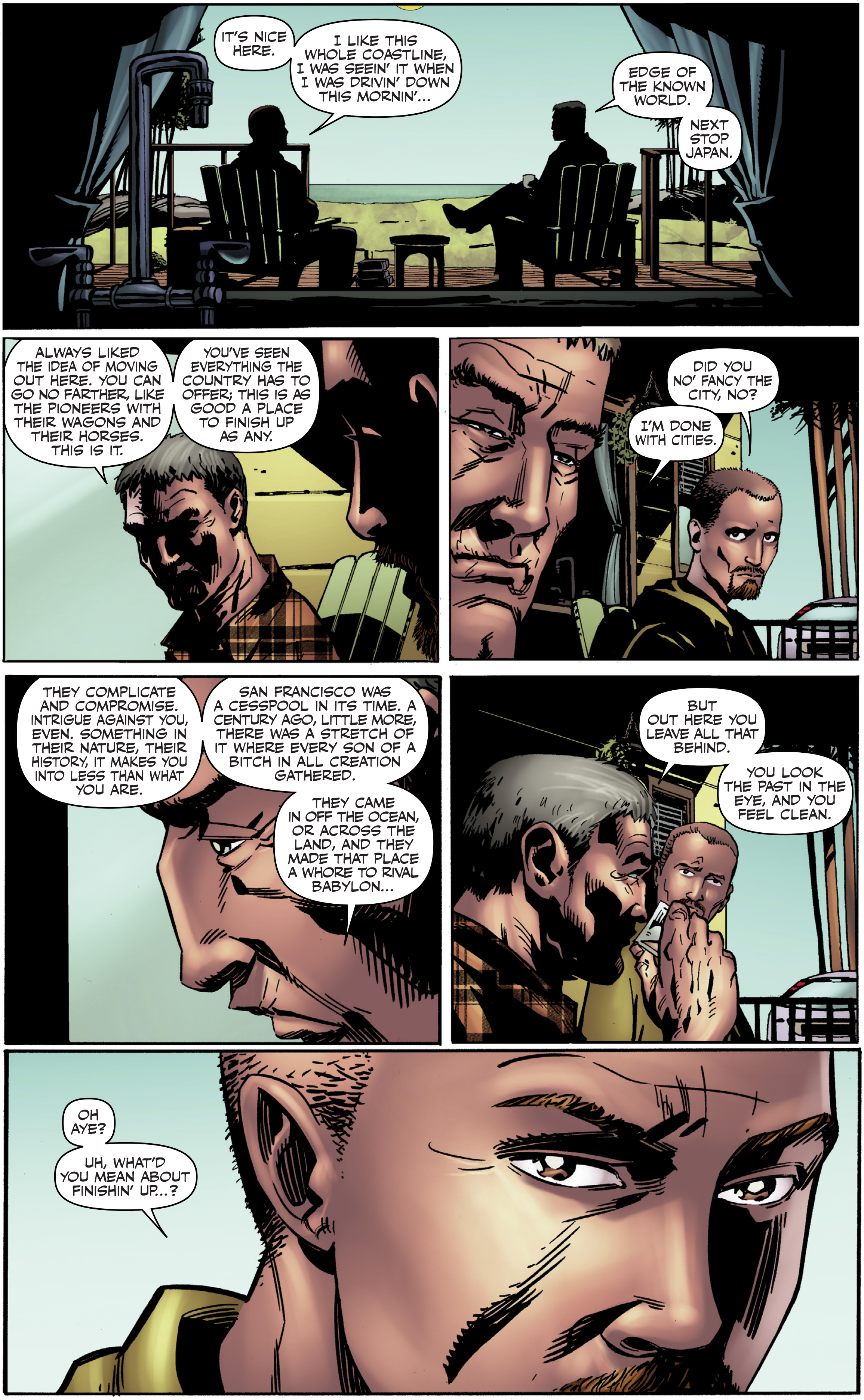

I DON'T WANNA GET BETTER AT *KILLIN'* *FOLK*...!
YOU SHOULD AT LEAST TRY TO GET BETTER AT SOMETHING. HOW LONG WERE YOU SEEING THAT GIRL BEFORE YOU REALIZED WHO SHE WAS?
YOU KNEW?
RECOGNIZED HER RIGHT AWAY. I KEEP UP WITH THIS STUFF, EVEN IF I'M NOT INVOLVED ANYMORE.
M.M. TOLD ME YOU'D HAD A BAD BREAK-UP BEFORE YOU LEFT; ALL I DID WAS PUT TWO AND TWO TOGETHER.
SOME GOING. LAYING A SUPE AND NOT EVEN KNOWING.
I PLAYED NICE GUY SO YOU'D RELAX AND TALK. I LISTENED TO YOU BITCH ABOUT YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY IN SCOTLAND, BUT ALL I COULD SEE WAS PEOPLE WHO LOVE YOU. YOU HAVE NOTHING TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THAT I CAN SEE.
AND NO EXCUSES FOR NOT PULLING YOUR HEAD OUT OF YOUR ASS, WHICH I HAVE TO SAY IS GOING TO TAKE SOME DOING.
NO, NO, THE GIRL--IT'S NO' AS SIMPLE AS--
THERE'S THINGS HAPPENED WI' HER I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT, I WASN'T READY FOR ANY OF IT...
PUT UP OR SHUT UP.
NO?
WHERE IS SHE, ANYWAY?
SHE'S...
I'M TRYNNA KEEP HER OUT O' THIS FOR NOW.

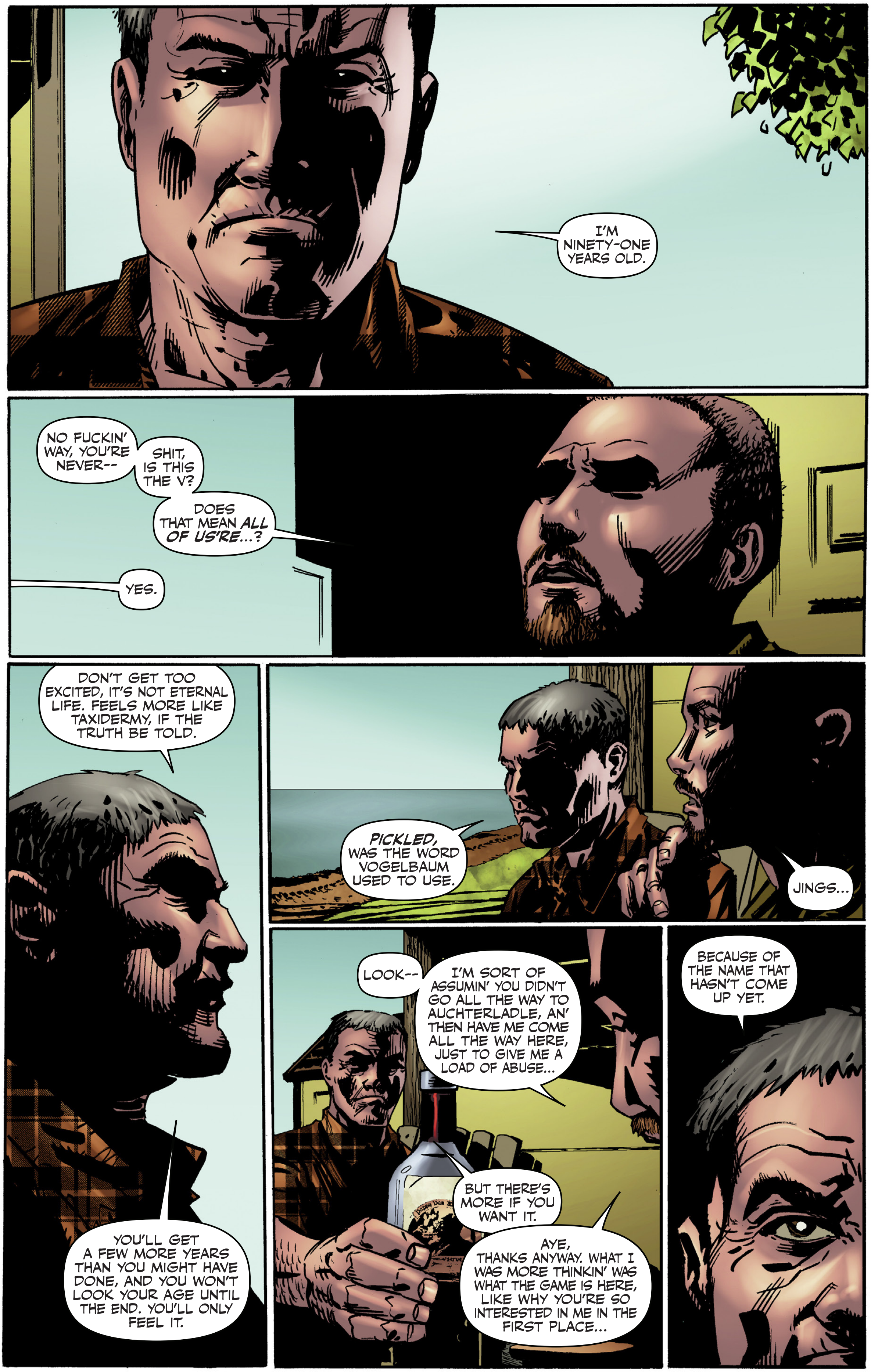

LOOK AT THIS.
LOOK WHERE WE ARE.
WE SHOULD BE *SO HAPPY*...
HELLO?
374-KSD
ALAMO HIRE
MM...?
SORRY.
I WAS, I WAS JUST THINKIN', I'VE GOT TO COME UP THIS WAY TOMORROW WHEN I GO TO SEE THE GUY...
THUD.
EH?
NOTHING.

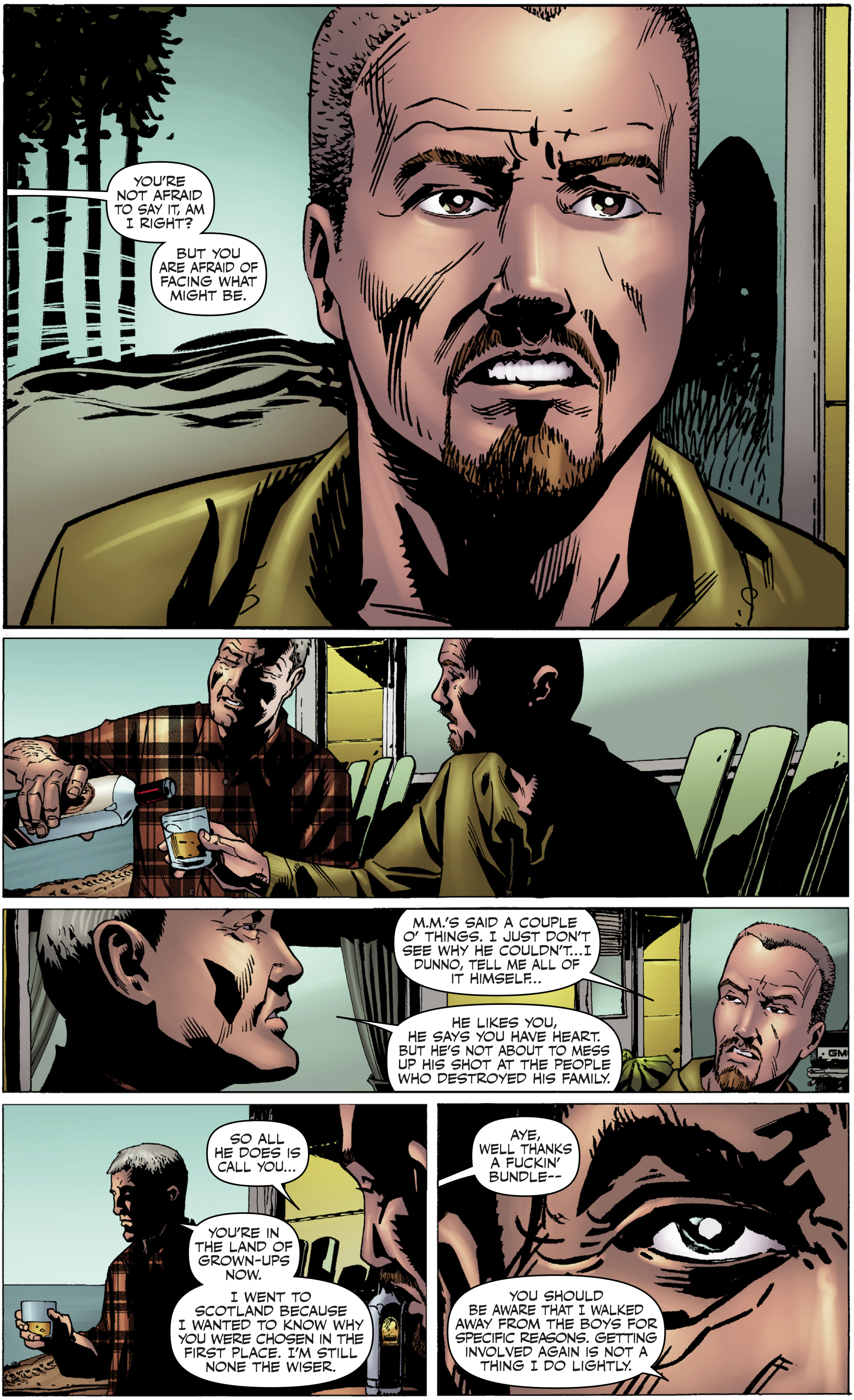

YOU WON'T BE COMING THIS WAY. YOU SAID YOUR MYSTERY MAN LIVES NEAR BIG SUR--THAT'S SOUTH OF THE CITY, NOT NORTH.
OH AYE...
YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT ME TO COME?
OH...NO.
'COURSE NOT.
AW ANNIE, NO' THIS AGAIN...!
I TOLD YOU, IT'S JUST TOO--
YES, YOU TOLD ME. I CAN'T COME WITH YOU BECAUSE A SUPE--WHICH YOU SOMETIMES CORRECT TO *ONE OF YOU PEOPLE,* THANKS--A SUPE COULD MESS EVERYTHING UP.
IN FACT, APPARENTLY I SHOULD GO AHEAD AND *QUIT* BEING A SUPE, BECAUSE NOT EVERYONE LOVES THEM AND THINGS MIGHT BE GETTING QUITE DANGEROUS FOR THEM SOON.
CAN'T YOU SEE HOW FRUSTRATING IT IS FOR ME? NOT JUST LITTLE HINTS LIKE THAT, THERE'S ALSO THE FACT THAT YOU SAW ***SECRET SURVEILLANCE FOOTAGE FROM THE SEVEN'S H.Q.***--
DON'T.
I'M NOT GOING TO MENTION IT.
I KNOW THE THOUGHT'S ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU WANT TO DISAPPEAR INSIDE YOUR OWN FORESKIN.
BUT CAN'T YOU SEE HOW OBVIOUS IT IS THAT YOU'RE JUST NOT WHO YOU SAY YOU ARE?

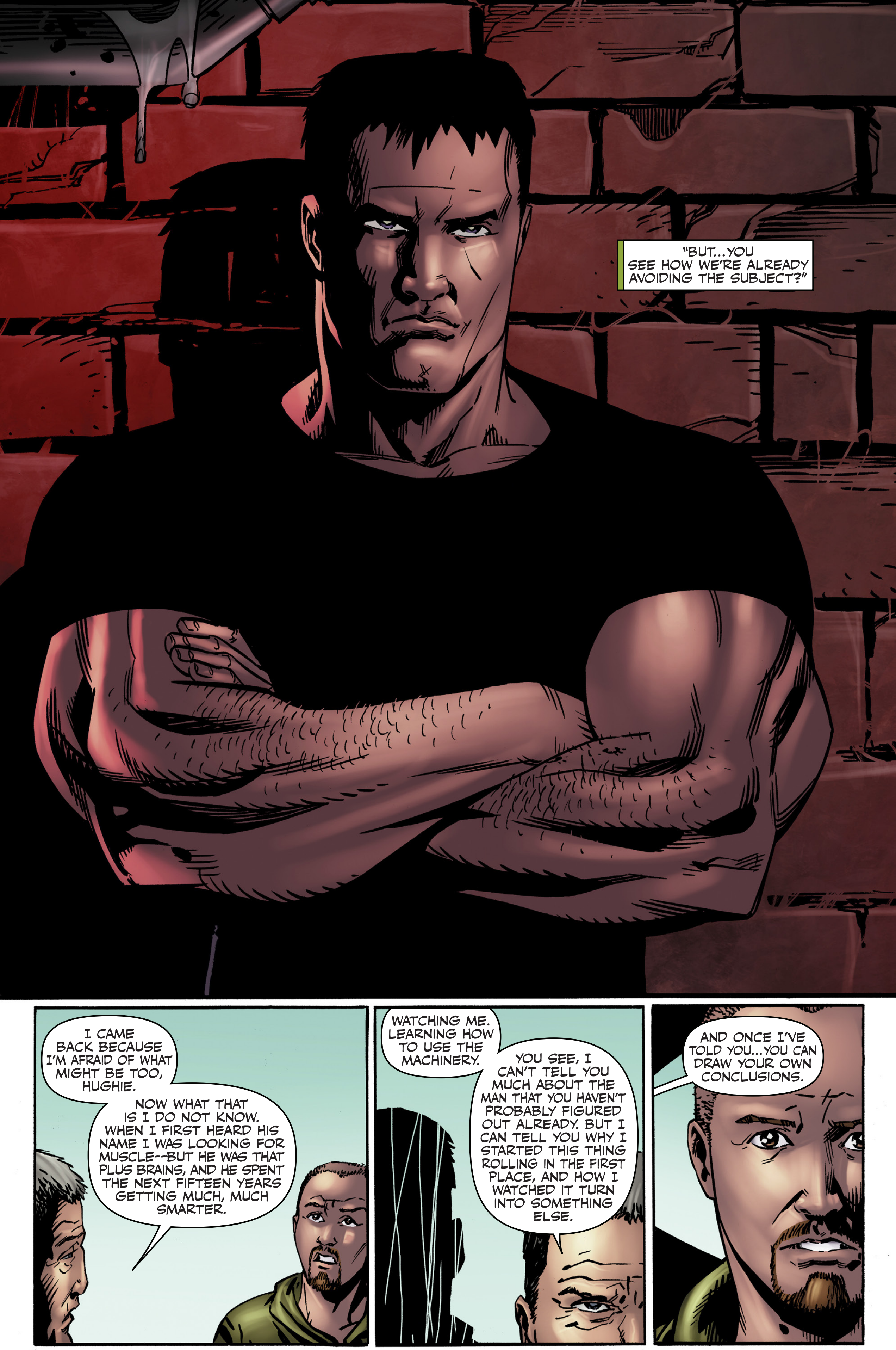

HMH.
THAT WAS LOVELY, THAT WAS. THAT THING ABOUT THE FORESKIN.
WELL, THAT'S ME, HUGHIE...
I'M THE PERFECT GIRL.
YOU READ ABOUT ME IN MAXIM OR WHATEVER. I TELL DIRTY JOKES LIKE I'M ONE OF THE GUYS, AND I'M SITTING THERE IN MY PANTIES AND BRA SO YOU CAN SEE I'M A PIECE OF ASS IN THE BARGAIN.
EXCEPT I'M REAL, SO I COME WITH ALL KINDS OF COMPLICATIONS.
WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU INTO, REALLY?
AW GOD, ANNIE...
YOU CAN'T TELL ME.
I KNOW.
YOU CAN'T TALK TO ME, YOU CAN'T RELAX WITH ME, YOU CAN BARELY EVEN BRING YOURSELF TO TOUCH ME.
AREN'T WE DOING WELL?
LOOK...I'M SO SORRY, I JUST...
I DUNNO HOW THIS CAN POSSIBLY TURN OUT WELL FOR US. I MEAN WE'VE BEEN OVER IT AGAIN AN' AGAIN AN' YOU'VE HEARD NOTHIN' THAT'S MADE YOU HAPPY, D'YOU NO' THINK YOU'VE PUT UP WITH ENOUGH?
D'YOU NO' THINK YOU'D BE BETTER... MAYBE...?
I CAN'T.

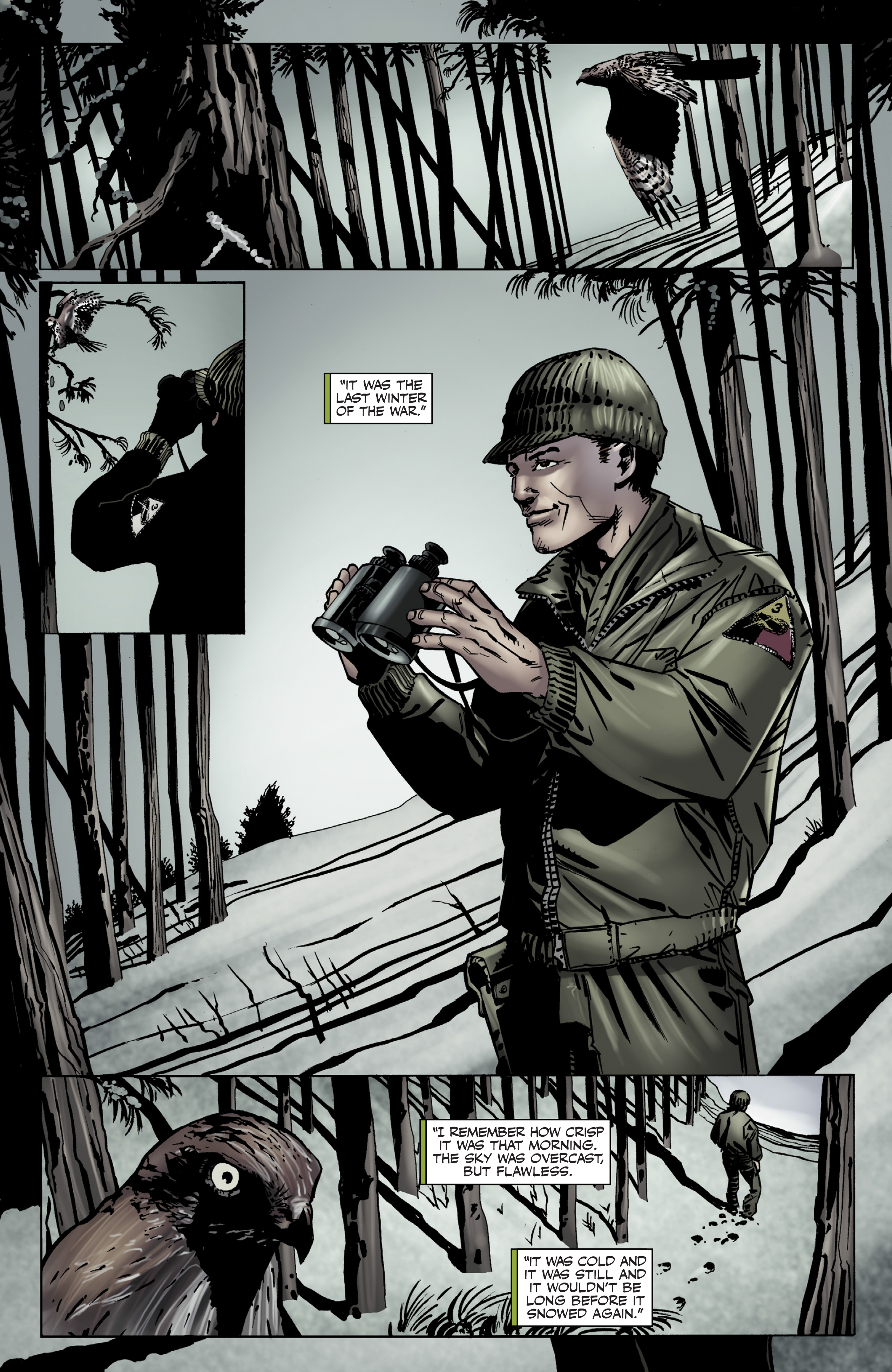

I FEEL LIKE YOU'RE THE ONLY HUMAN BEING I'VE EVER KNOWN.
I MEAN LOOK AT MY FOSTER-PARENTS. OR THE YOUNG AMERICANS. OR THE ***SEVEN,*** FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.
LOOK HOW THEY ALL TREATED ME, COMPARED TO WHAT YOU AND I HAD.
WHY WOULD I EVER WANT TO LET YOU GO?
I'M SORRY.
I HADN'T THOUGHT OF IT LIKE THAT.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO KEEP ON TELLING ME YOU'RE SORRY.
I KNOW I'M JUST A GIANT COMPLICATION IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW. BUT IF YOU COULD CARRY ON BEING SORT OF SEMI-NICE TO ME FOR A WHILE, I'D APPRECIATE IT.
I--
I READ ABOUT A CUBAN RESTAURANT UP ON THE HAIGHT. IT SOUNDED REALLY, REALLY GOOD.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE LEAVING IN THE MORNING, DO YOU THINK WE COULD GO THERE TONIGHT?
OCH, AYE, OF COURSE WE CAN.
THAT'D BE BRILLIANT, WOULDN'T IT?

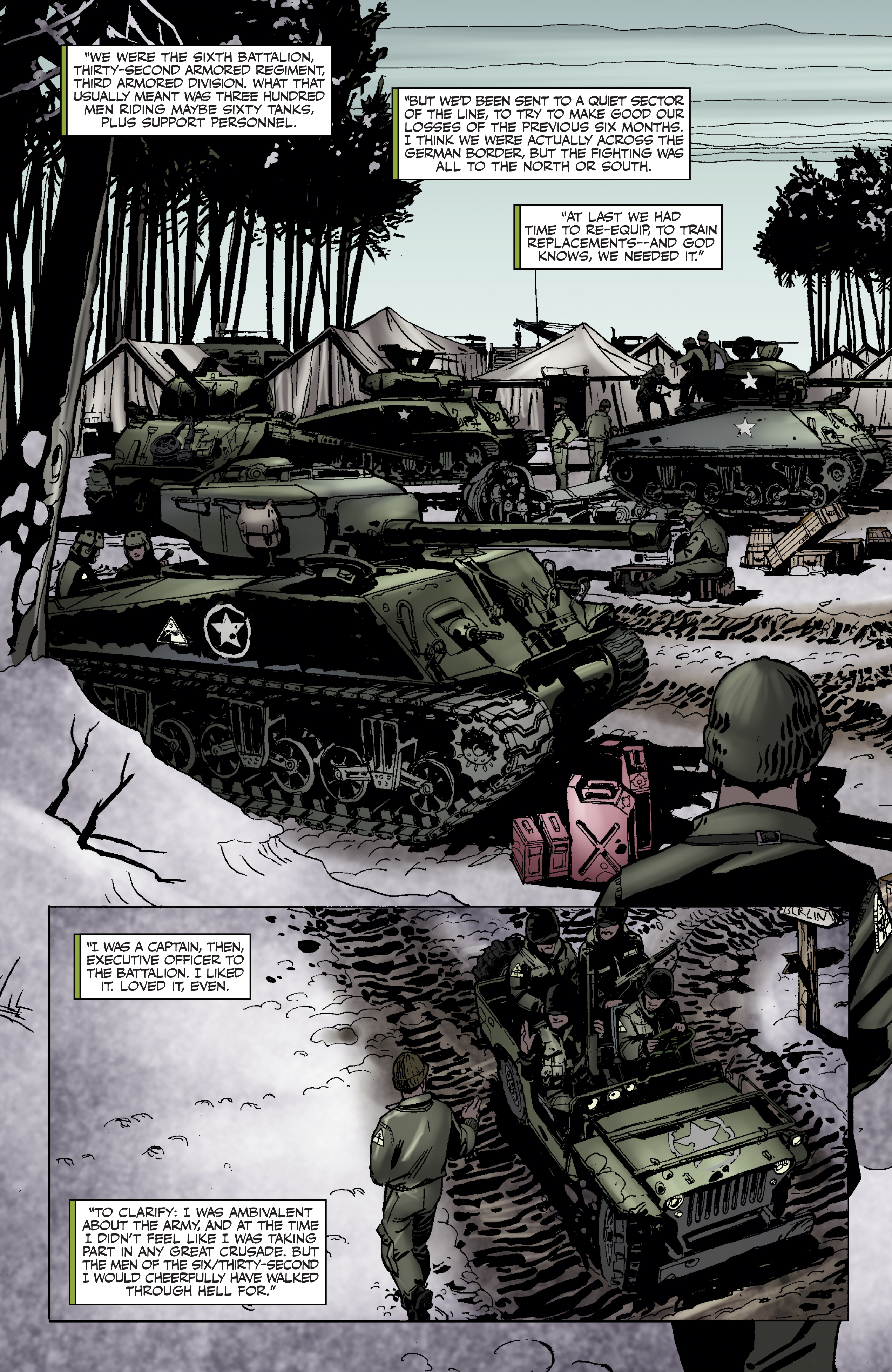

IT'S NICE HERE.
I LIKE THIS WHOLE COASTLINE, I WAS SEEIN' IT WHEN I WAS DRIVIN' DOWN THIS MORNIN'...
EDGE OF THE KNOWN WORLD.
NEXT STOP JAPAN.
ALWAYS LIKED THE IDEA OF MOVING OUT HERE. YOU CAN GO NO FARTHER, LIKE THE PIONEERS WITH THEIR WAGONS AND THEIR HORSES. THIS IS IT.
YOU'VE SEEN EVERYTHING THE COUNTRY HAS TO OFFER; THIS IS AS GOOD A PLACE TO FINISH UP AS ANY.
DID YOU NO' FANCY THE CITY, NO?
I'M DONE WITH CITIES.
THEY COMPLICATE AND COMPROMISE. INTRIGUE AGAINST YOU, EVEN. SOMETHING IN THEIR NATURE, THEIR HISTORY, IT MAKES YOU INTO LESS THAN WHAT YOU ARE.
SAN FRANCISCO WAS A CESSPOOL IN ITS TIME. A CENTURY AGO, LITTLE MORE, THERE WAS A STRETCH OF IT WHERE EVERY SON OF A BITCH IN ALL CREATION GATHERED.
THEY CAME IN OFF THE OCEAN, OR ACROSS THE LAND, AND THEY MADE THAT PLACE A WHORE TO RIVAL BABYLON...
BUT OUT HERE YOU LEAVE ALL THAT BEHIND.
YOU LOOK THE PAST IN THE EYE, AND YOU FEEL CLEAN.
OH AYE?
UH, WHAT'D YOU MEAN ABOUT FINISHIN' UP...?

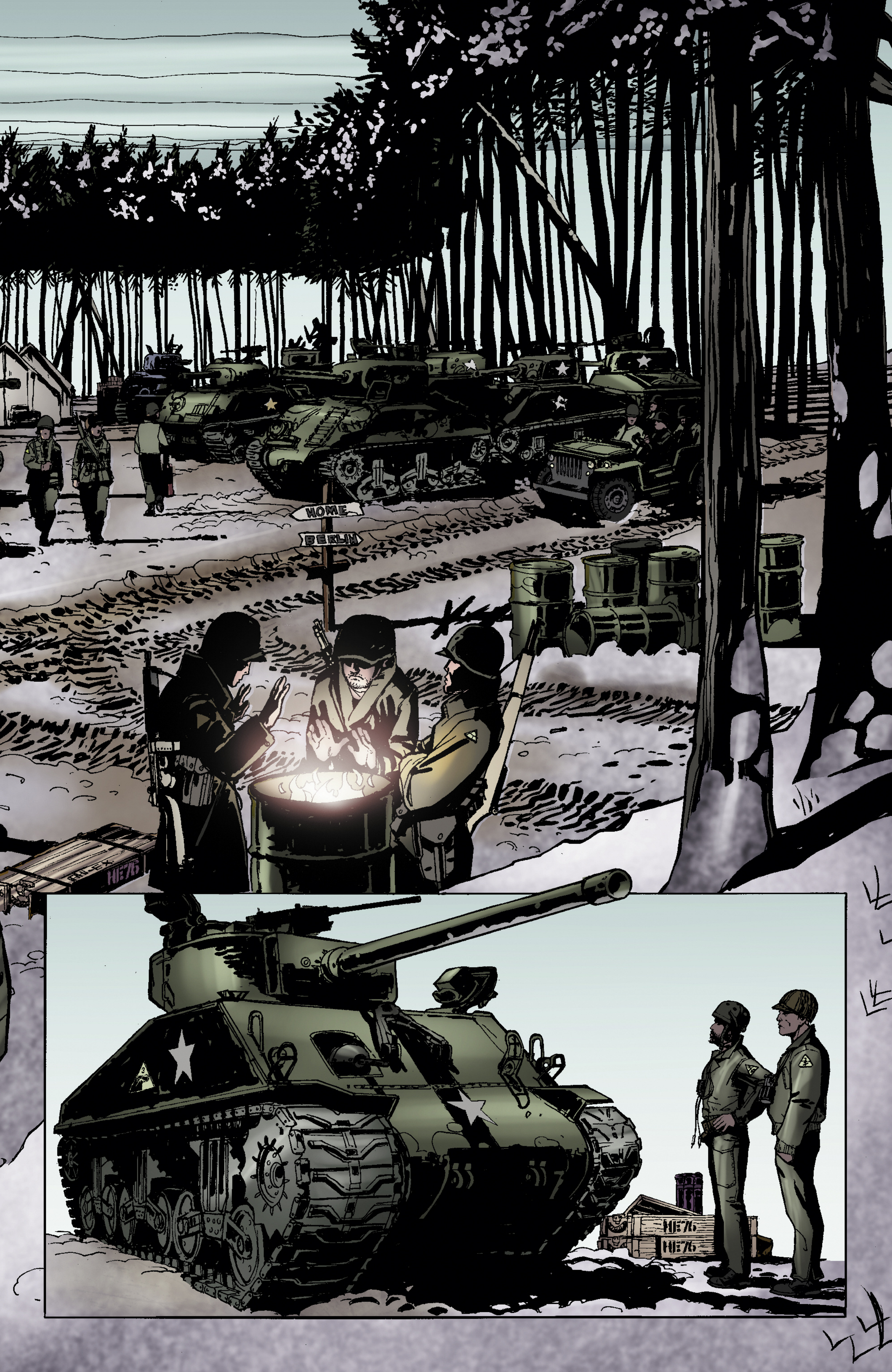

I'M NINETY-ONE YEARS OLD.
NO FUCKIN' WAY, YOU'RE NEVER--
SHIT, IS THIS THE V?
DOES THAT MEAN *ALL OF US'RE...?*
YES.
DON'T GET TOO EXCITED, IT'S NOT ETERNAL LIFE. FEELS MORE LIKE TAXIDERMY, IF THE TRUTH BE TOLD.
YOU'LL GET A FEW MORE YEARS THAN YOU MIGHT HAVE DONE, AND YOU WON'T LOOK YOUR AGE UNTIL THE END. YOU'LL ONLY FEEL IT.
PICKLED, WAS THE WORD VOGELBAUM USED TO USE.
JINGS...
LOOK--
I'M SORT OF ASSUMIN' YOU DIDN'T GO ALL THE WAY TO AUCHTERLADLE, AN' THEN HAVE ME COME ALL THE WAY HERE, JUST TO GIVE ME A LOAD OF ABUSE...
BUT THERE'S MORE IF YOU WANT IT.
AYE, THANKS ANYWAY. WHAT I WAS MORE THINKIN' WAS WHAT THE GAME IS HERE, LIKE WHY YOU'RE SO INTERESTED IN ME IN THE FIRST PLACE...
BECAUSE OF THE NAME THAT HASN'T COME UP YET.


YOU'RE NOT AFRAID TO SAY IT, AM I RIGHT?
BUT YOU ARE AFRAID OF FACING WHAT MIGHT BE.
M.M.'S SAID A COUPLE O' THINGS. I JUST DON'T SEE WHY HE COULDN'T...I DUNNO, TELL ME ALL OF IT HIMSELF...
HE LIKES YOU, HE SAYS YOU HAVE HEART. BUT HE'S NOT ABOUT TO MESS UP HIS SHOT AT THE PEOPLE WHO DESTROYED HIS FAMILY.
SO ALL HE DOES IS CALL YOU...
YOU'RE IN THE LAND OF GROWN-UPS NOW.
I WENT TO SCOTLAND BECAUSE I WANTED TO KNOW WHY YOU WERE CHOSEN IN THE FIRST PLACE. I'M STILL NONE THE WISER.
AYE, WELL THANKS A FUCKIN' BUNDLE--
YOU SHOULD BE AWARE THAT I WALKED AWAY FROM THE BOYS FOR SPECIFIC REASONS. GETTING INVOLVED AGAIN IS NOT A THING I DO LIGHTLY.


"BUT...YOU SEE HOW WE'RE ALREADY AVOIDING THE SUBJECT?"
I CAME BACK BECAUSE I'M AFRAID OF WHAT MIGHT BE TOO, HUGHIE.
NOW WHAT THAT IS I DO NOT KNOW. WHEN I FIRST HEARD HIS NAME I WAS LOOKING FOR MUSCLE--BUT HE WAS THAT PLUS BRAINS, AND HE SPENT THE NEXT FIFTEEN YEARS GETTING MUCH, MUCH SMARTER.
WATCHING ME. LEARNING HOW TO USE THE MACHINERY.
YOU SEE, I CAN'T TELL YOU MUCH ABOUT THE MAN THAT YOU HAVEN'T PROBABLY FIGURED OUT ALREADY. BUT I CAN TELL YOU WHY I STARTED THIS THING ROLLING IN THE FIRST PLACE, AND HOW I WATCHED IT TURN INTO SOMETHING ELSE.
AND ONCE I'VE TOLD YOU...YOU CAN DRAW YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS.


"IT WAS THE LAST WINTER OF THE WAR."
"I REMEMBER HOW CRISP IT WAS THAT MORNING. THE SKY WAS OVERCAST, BUT FLAWLESS.
"IT WAS COLD AND IT WAS STILL AND IT WOULDN'T BE LONG BEFORE IT SNOWED AGAIN."


"WE WERE THE SIXTH BATTALION, THIRTY-SECOND ARMORED REGIMENT, THIRD ARMORED DIVISION. WHAT THAT USUALLY MEANT WAS THREE HUNDRED MEN RIDING MAYBE SIXTY TANKS, PLUS SUPPORT PERSONNEL.
"BUT WE'D BEEN SENT TO A QUIET SECTOR OF THE LINE, TO TRY TO MAKE GOOD OUR LOSSES OF THE PREVIOUS SIX MONTHS. I THINK WE WERE ACTUALLY ACROSS THE GERMAN BORDER, BUT THE FIGHTING WAS ALL TO THE NORTH OR SOUTH.
"AT LAST WE HAD TIME TO RE-EQUIP, TO TRAIN REPLACEMENTS--AND GOD KNOWS, WE NEEDED IT."
3
BERLIN
"I WAS A CAPTAIN, THEN, EXECUTIVE OFFICER TO THE BATTALION. I LIKED IT. LOVED IT, EVEN.
"TO CLARIFY: I WAS AMBIVALENT ABOUT THE ARMY, AND AT THE TIME I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE I WAS TAKING PART IN ANY GREAT CRUSADE. BUT THE MEN OF THE SIX/THIRTY-SECOND I WOULD CHEERFULLY HAVE WALKED THROUGH HELL FOR."


HOME
BERLIN
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HE76
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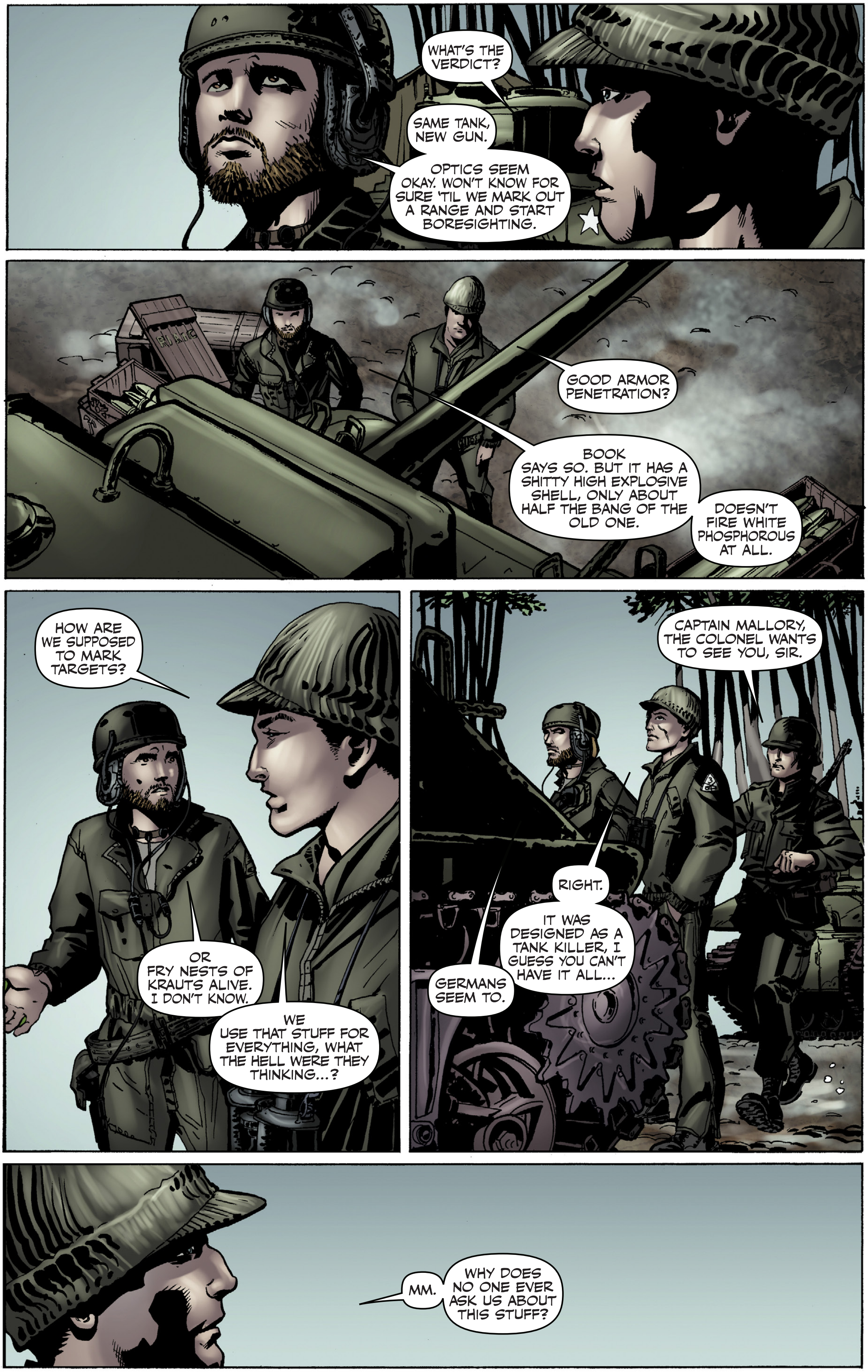
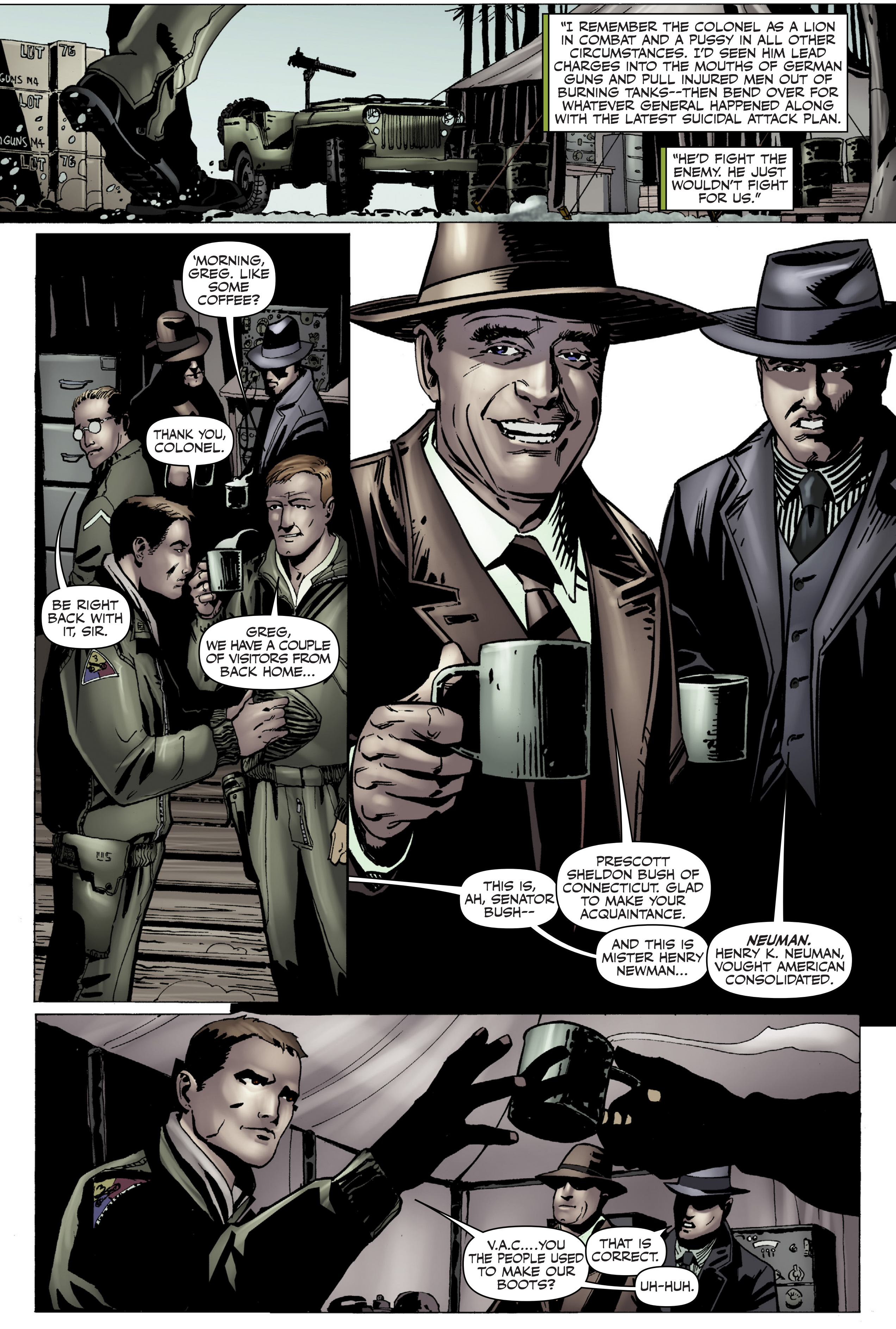
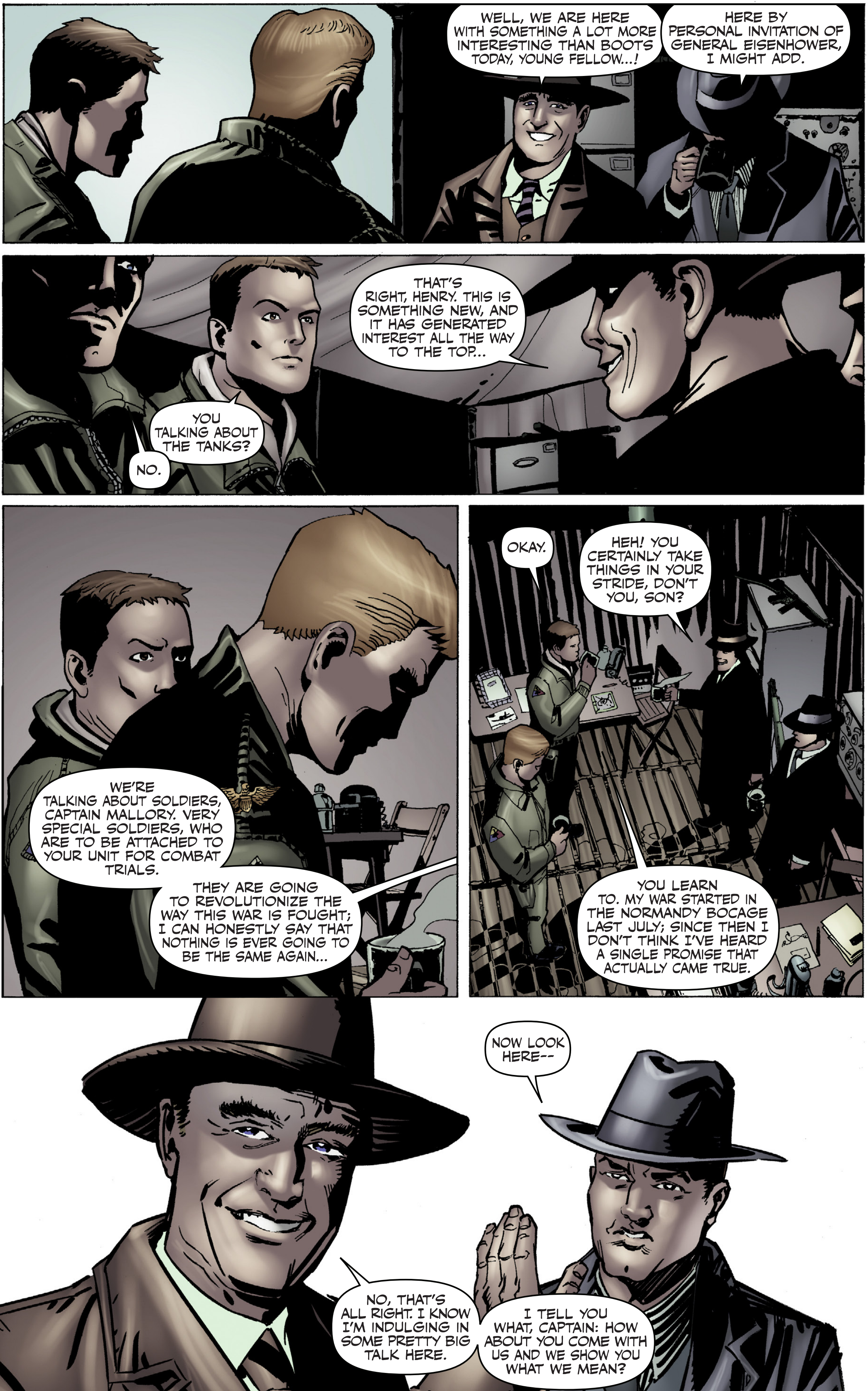
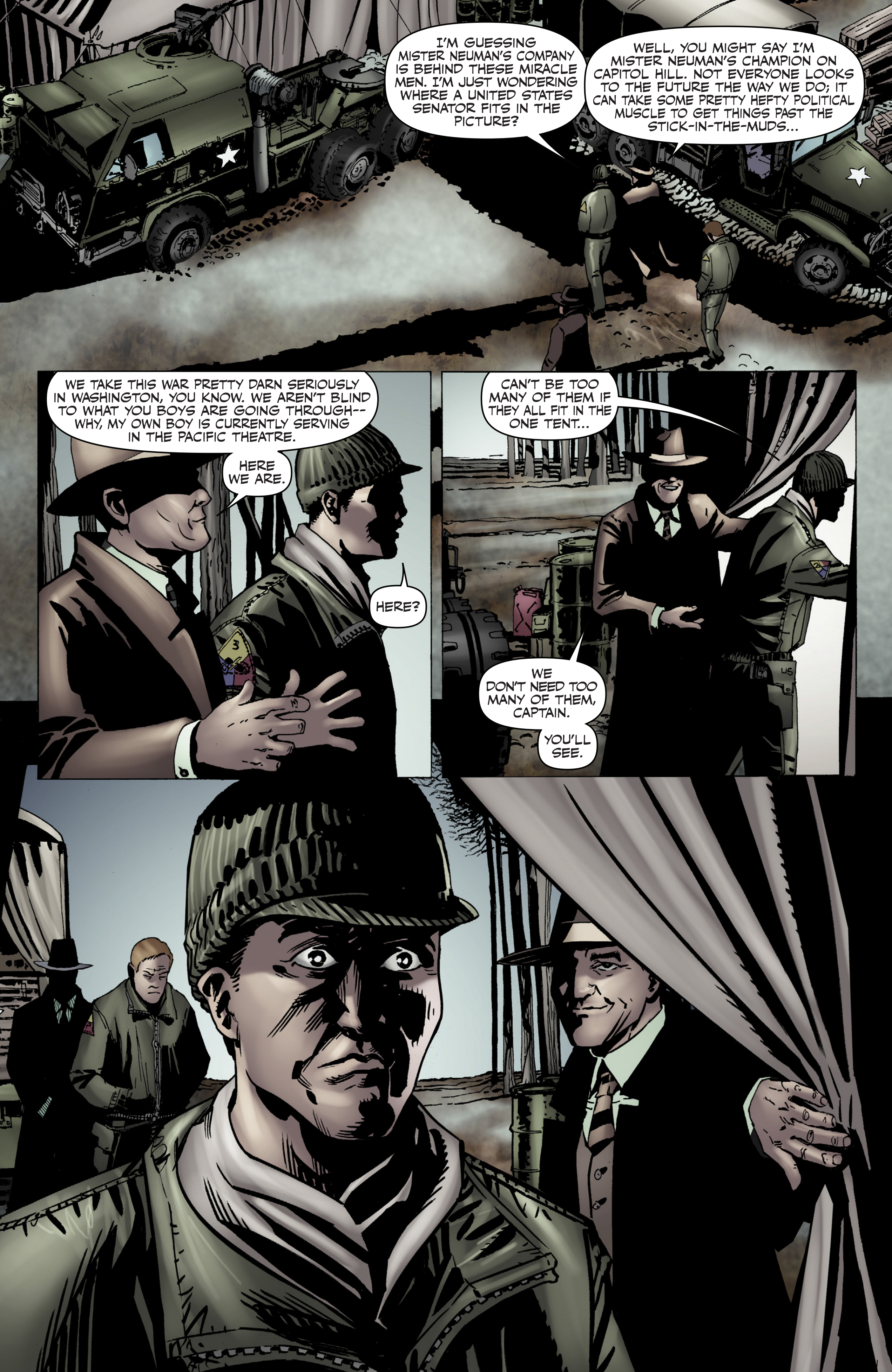
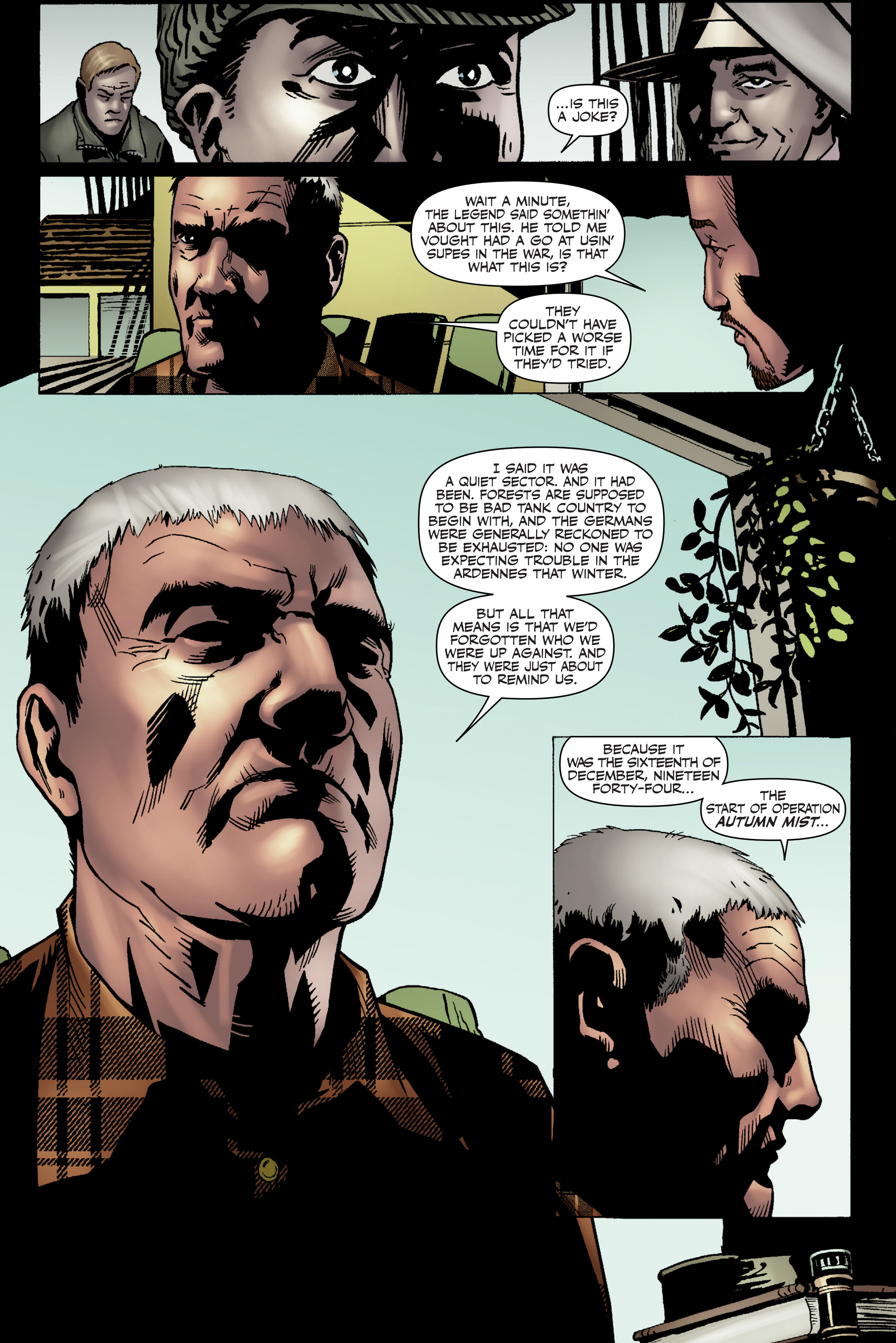
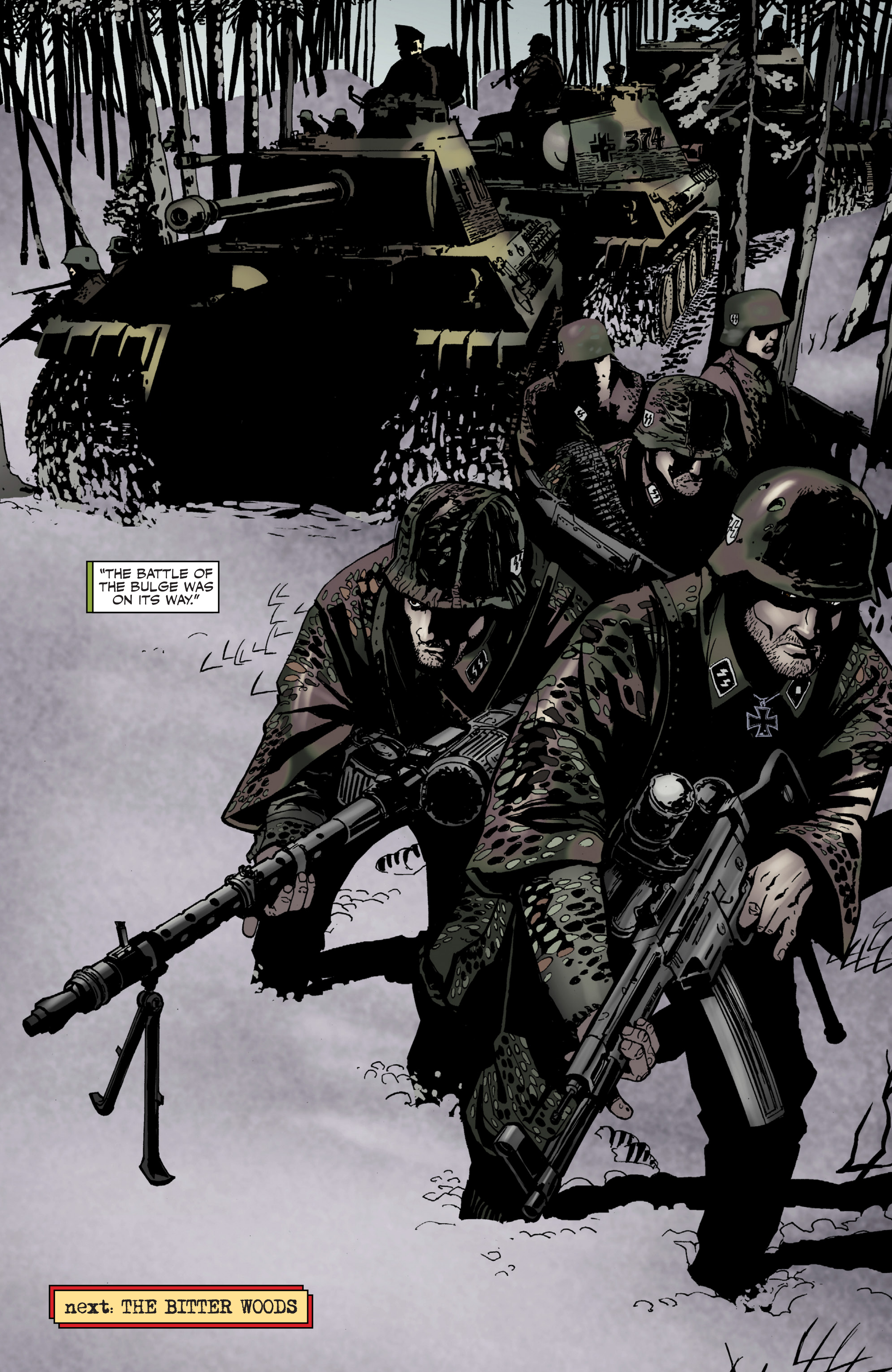

WHAT'S THE VERDICT?
SAME TANK, NEW GUN.
OPTICS SEEM OKAY. WON'T KNOW FOR SURE 'TIL WE MARK OUT A RANGE AND START BORESIGHTING.
GOOD ARMOR PENETRATION?
BOOK SAYS SO. BUT IT HAS A SHITTY HIGH EXPLOSIVE SHELL, ONLY ABOUT HALF THE BANG OF THE OLD ONE.
DOESN'T FIRE WHITE PHOSPHOROUS AT ALL.
HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO MARK TARGETS?
OR FRY NESTS OF KRAUTS ALIVE. I DON'T KNOW.
WE USE THAT STUFF FOR EVERYTHING, WHAT THE HELL WERE THEY THINKING...?
CAPTAIN MALLORY, THE COLONEL WANTS TO SEE YOU, SIR.
RIGHT.
IT WAS DESIGNED AS A TANK KILLER, I GUESS YOU CAN'T HAVE IT ALL...
GERMANS SEEM TO.
MM.
WHY DOES NO ONE EVER ASK US ABOUT THIS STUFF?


"I REMEMBER THE COLONEL AS A LION IN COMBAT AND A PUSSY IN ALL OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES. I'D SEEN HIM LEAD CHARGES INTO THE MOUTHS OF GERMAN GUNS AND PULL INJURED MEN OUT OF BURNING TANKS--THEN BEND OVER FOR WHATEVER GENERAL HAPPENED ALONG WITH THE LATEST SUICIDAL ATTACK PLAN.
"HE'D FIGHT THE ENEMY. HE JUST WOULDN'T FIGHT FOR US."
LOT 76
GUNS M4
'MORNING, GREG. LIKE SOME COFFEE?
THANK YOU, COLONEL.
BE RIGHT BACK WITH IT, SIR.
GREG, WE HAVE A COUPLE OF VISITORS FROM BACK HOME...
THIS IS, AH, SENATOR BUSH--
PRESCOTT SHELDON BUSH OF CONNECTICUT. GLAD TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE.
AND THIS IS MISTER HENRY NEWMAN...
NEUMAN. HENRY K. NEUMAN, VOUGHT AMERICAN CONSOLIDATED.
V.A.C....YOU THE PEOPLE USED TO MAKE OUR BOOTS?
THAT IS CORRECT.
UH-HUH.


WELL, WE ARE HERE WITH SOMETHING A LOT MORE INTERESTING THAN BOOTS TODAY, YOUNG FELLOW...!
HERE BY PERSONAL INVITATION OF GENERAL EISENHOWER, I MIGHT ADD.
THAT'S RIGHT, HENRY. THIS IS SOMETHING NEW, AND IT HAS GENERATED INTEREST ALL THE WAY TO THE TOP...
YOU TALKING ABOUT THE TANKS?
NO.
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT SOLDIERS, CAPTAIN MALLORY. VERY SPECIAL SOLDIERS, WHO ARE TO BE ATTACHED TO YOUR UNIT FOR COMBAT TRIALS.
THEY ARE GOING TO REVOLUTIONIZE THE WAY THIS WAR IS FOUGHT; I CAN HONESTLY SAY THAT NOTHING IS EVER GOING TO BE THE SAME AGAIN...
OKAY.
HEH! YOU CERTAINLY TAKE THINGS IN YOUR STRIDE, DON'T YOU, SON?
YOU LEARN TO. MY WAR STARTED IN THE NORMANDY BOCAGE LAST JULY; SINCE THEN I DON'T THINK I'VE HEARD A SINGLE PROMISE THAT ACTUALLY CAME TRUE.
NOW LOOK HERE--
NO, THAT'S ALL RIGHT. I KNOW I'M INDULGING IN SOME PRETTY BIG TALK HERE.
I TELL YOU WHAT, CAPTAIN: HOW ABOUT YOU COME WITH US AND WE SHOW YOU WHAT WE MEAN?

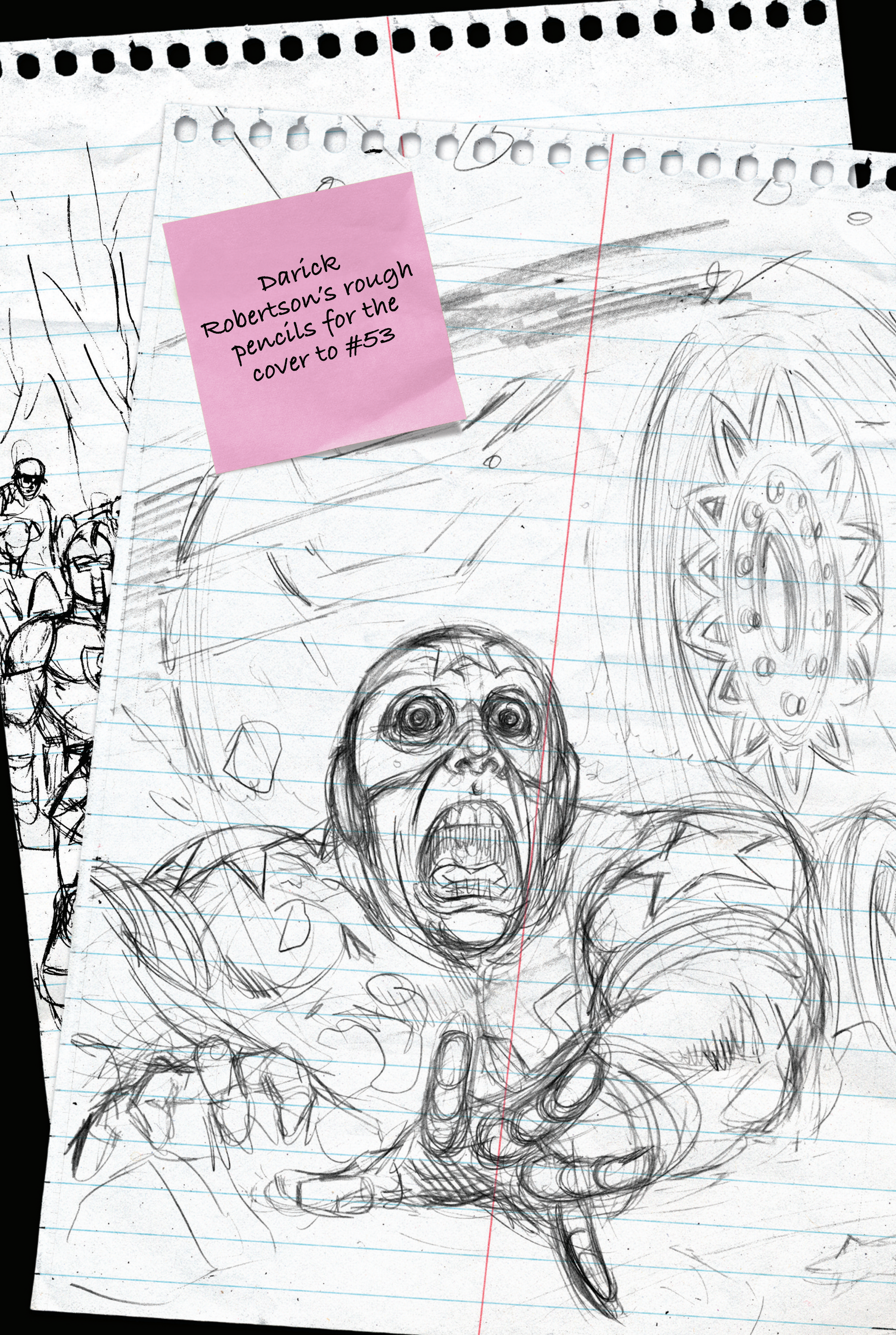

I'M GUESSING MISTER NEUMAN'S COMPANY IS BEHIND THESE MIRACLE MEN. I'M JUST WONDERING WHERE A UNITED STATES SENATOR FITS IN THE PICTURE?
WELL, YOU MIGHT SAY I'M MISTER NEUMAN'S CHAMPION ON CAPITOL HILL. NOT EVERYONE LOOKS TO THE FUTURE THE WAY WE DO; IT CAN TAKE SOME PRETTY HEFTY POLITICAL MUSCLE TO GET THINGS PAST THE STICK-IN-THE-MUDS...
WE TAKE THIS WAR PRETTY DARN SERIOUSLY IN WASHINGTON, YOU KNOW. WE AREN'T BLIND TO WHAT YOU BOYS ARE GOING THROUGH--WHY, MY OWN BOY IS CURRENTLY SERVING IN THE PACIFIC THEATRE.
HERE WE ARE.
HERE?
CAN'T BE TOO MANY OF THEM IF THEY ALL FIT IN THE ONE TENT...
WE DON'T NEED TOO MANY OF THEM, CAPTAIN.
YOU'LL SEE.


...IS THIS A JOKE?
WAIT A MINUTE, THE LEGEND SAID SOMETHIN' ABOUT THIS. HE TOLD ME VOUGHT HAD A GO AT USIN' SUPES IN THE WAR, IS THAT WHAT THIS IS?
THEY COULDN'T HAVE PICKED A WORSE TIME FOR IT IF THEY'D TRIED.
I SAID IT WAS A QUIET SECTOR. AND IT HAD BEEN. FORESTS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE BAD TANK COUNTRY TO BEGIN WITH, AND THE GERMANS WERE GENERALLY RECKONED TO BE EXHAUSTED: NO ONE WAS EXPECTING TROUBLE IN THE ARDENNES THAT WINTER.
BUT ALL THAT MEANS IS THAT WE'D FORGOTTEN WHO WE WERE UP AGAINST. AND THEY WERE JUST ABOUT TO REMIND US.
BECAUSE IT WAS THE SIXTEENTH OF DECEMBER, NINETEEN FORTY-FOUR...
THE START OF OPERATION *AUTUMN MIST*...

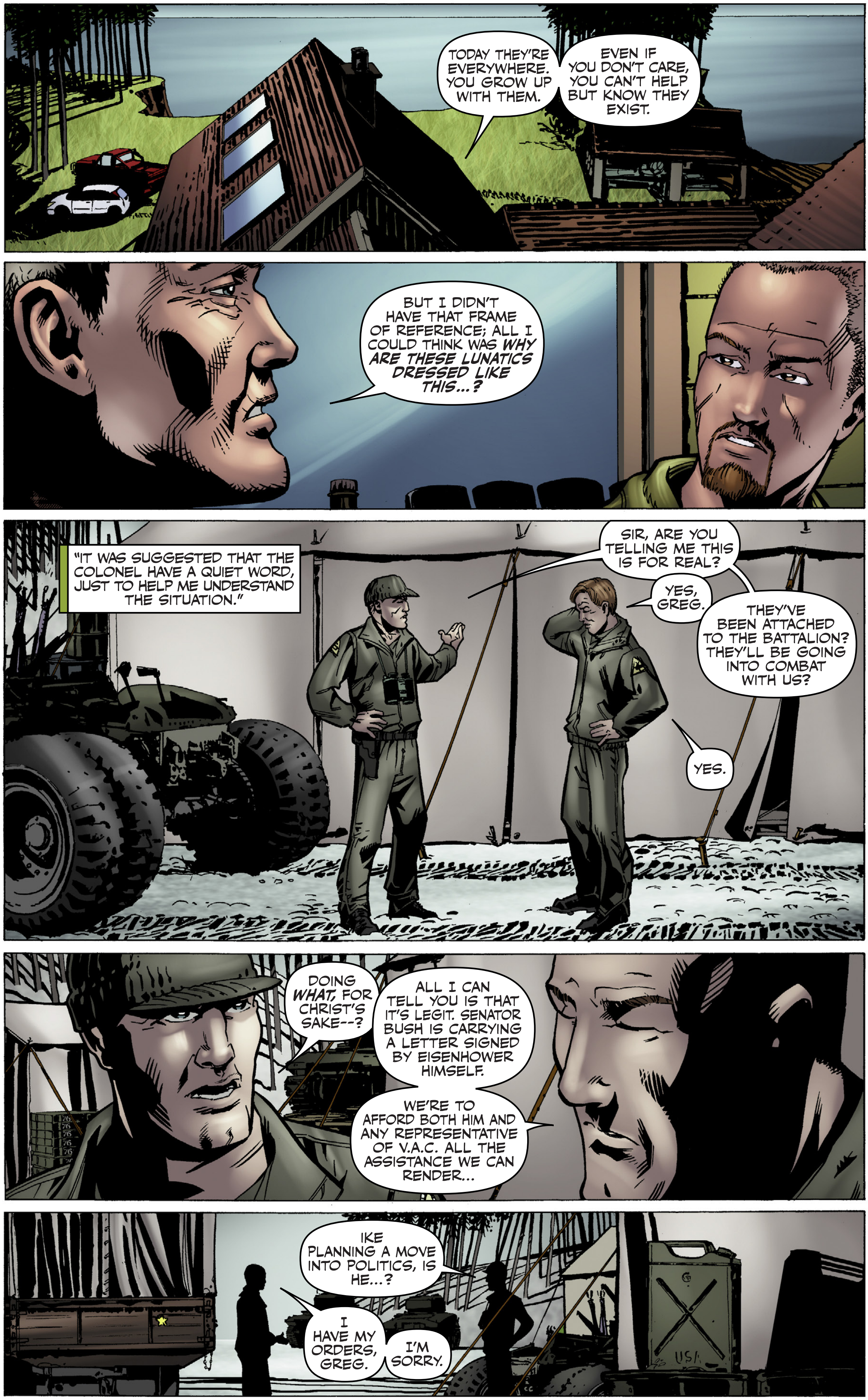

374
"THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE WAS ON ITS WAY."
next: THE BITTER WOODS

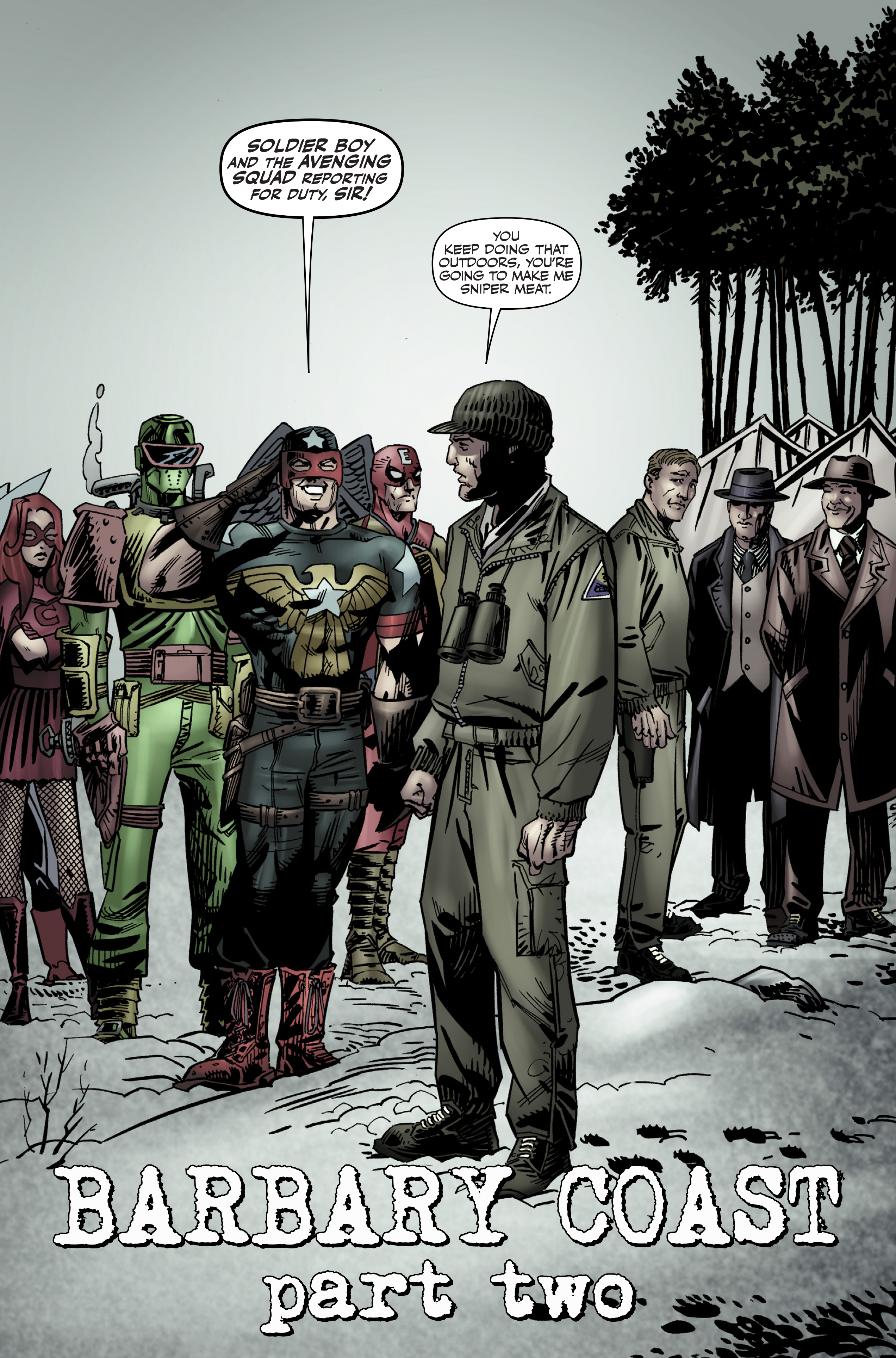
FIFTY-THREE

DA RI CK 2010



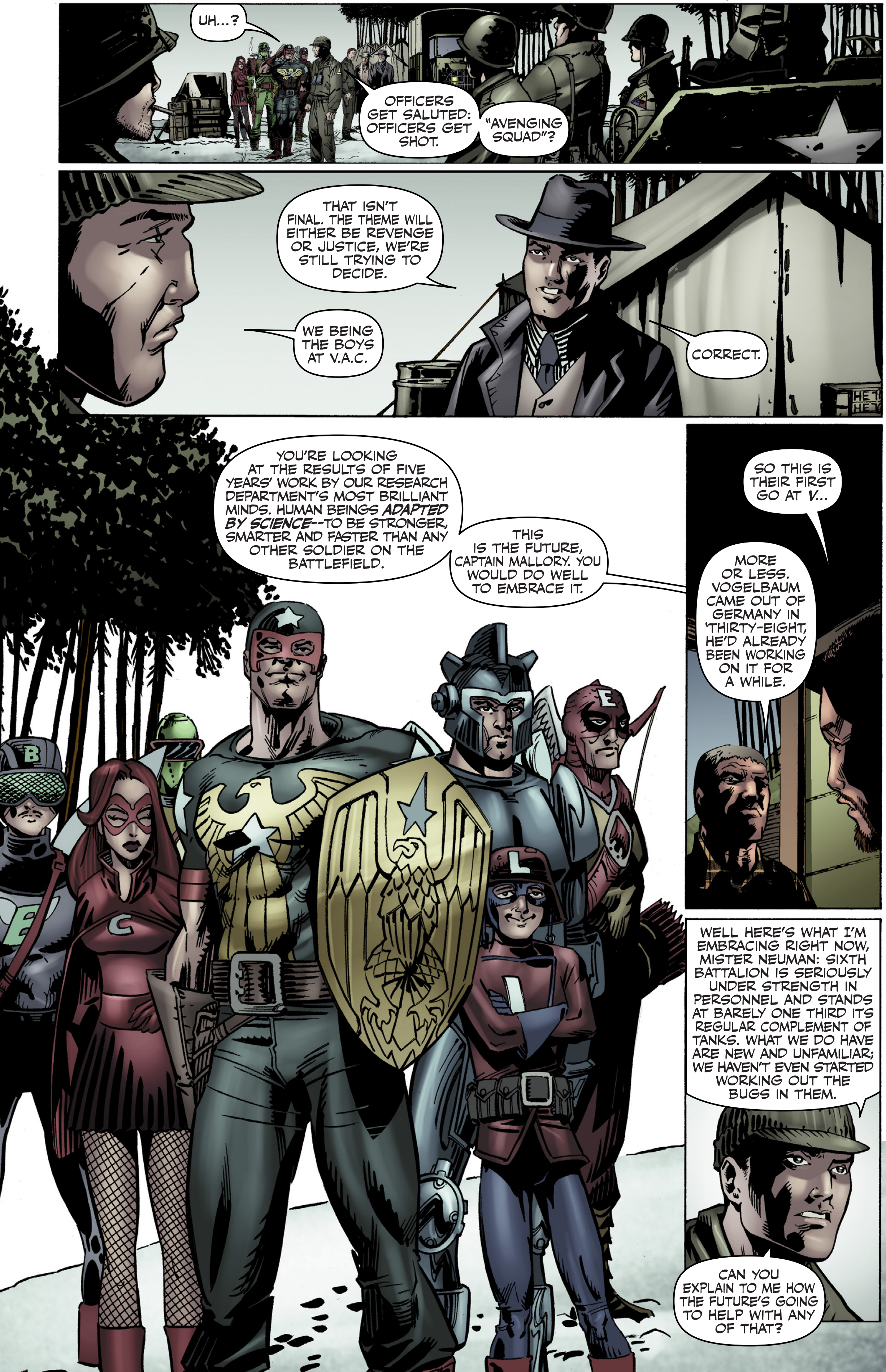
Darick Robertson's rough pencils for the cover to #53

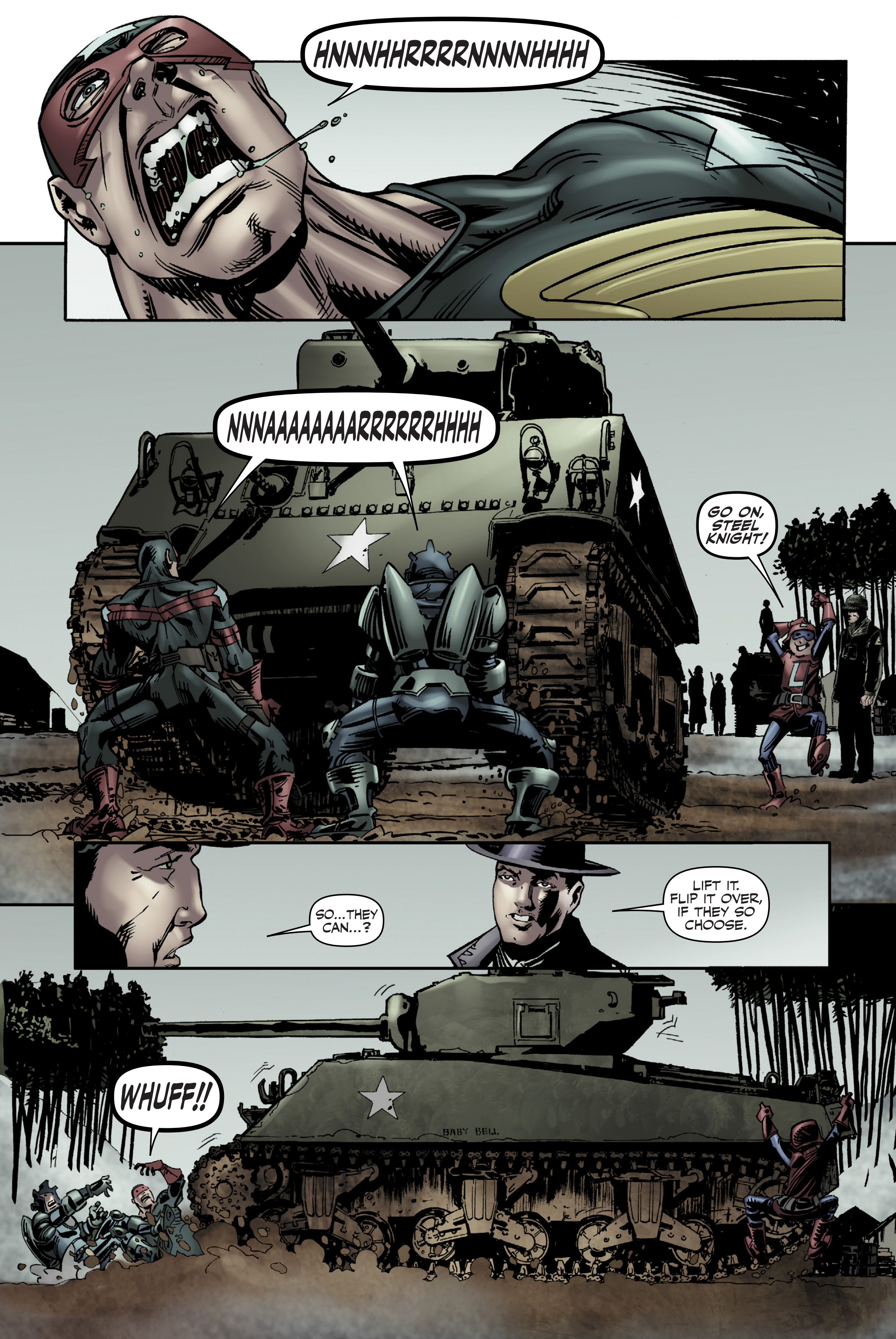

TODAY THEY'RE EVERYWHERE. YOU GROW UP WITH THEM.
EVEN IF YOU DON'T CARE, YOU CAN'T HELP BUT KNOW THEY EXIST.
BUT I DIDN'T HAVE THAT FRAME OF REFERENCE; ALL I COULD THINK WAS *WHY ARE THESE LUNATICS DRESSED LIKE THIS...?*
"IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT THE COLONEL HAVE A QUIET WORD, JUST TO HELP ME UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION."
SIR, ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS IS FOR REAL?
YES, GREG.
THEY'VE BEEN ATTACHED TO THE BATTALION? THEY'LL BE GOING INTO COMBAT WITH US?
YES.
DOING *WHAT,* FOR CHRIST'S SAKE--?
ALL I CAN TELL YOU IS THAT IT'S LEGIT. SENATOR BUSH IS CARRYING A LETTER SIGNED BY EISENHOWER HIMSELF.
WE'RE TO AFFORD BOTH HIM AND ANY REPRESENTATIVE OF V.A.C. ALL THE ASSISTANCE WE CAN RENDER...
IKE PLANNING A MOVE INTO POLITICS, IS HE...?
I HAVE MY ORDERS, GREG.
I'M SORRY.
USA

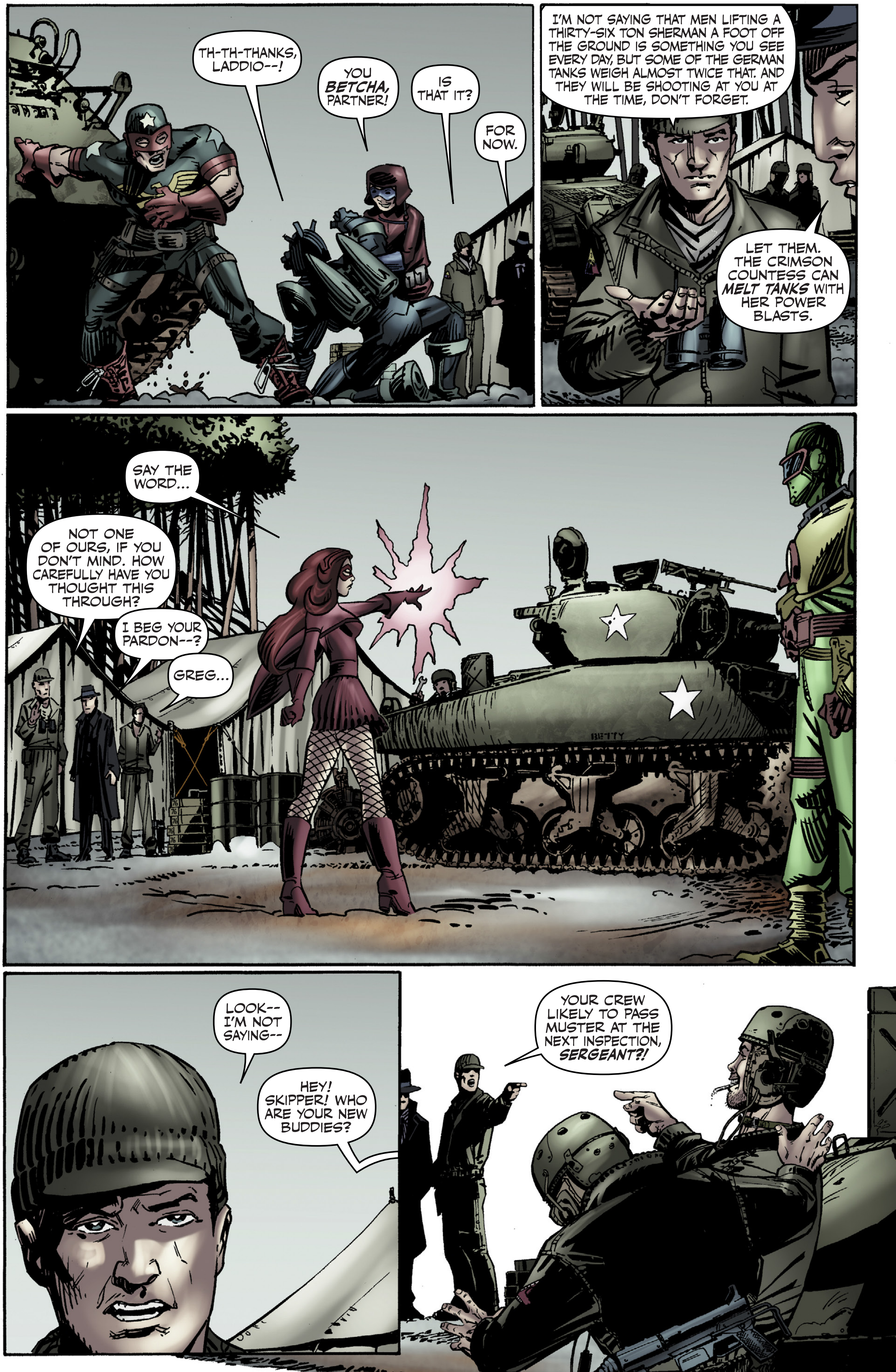

SOLDIER BOY AND THE AVENGING SQUAD REPORTING FOR DUTY, SIR!
YOU KEEP DOING THAT OUTDOORS, YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE ME SNIPER MEAT.

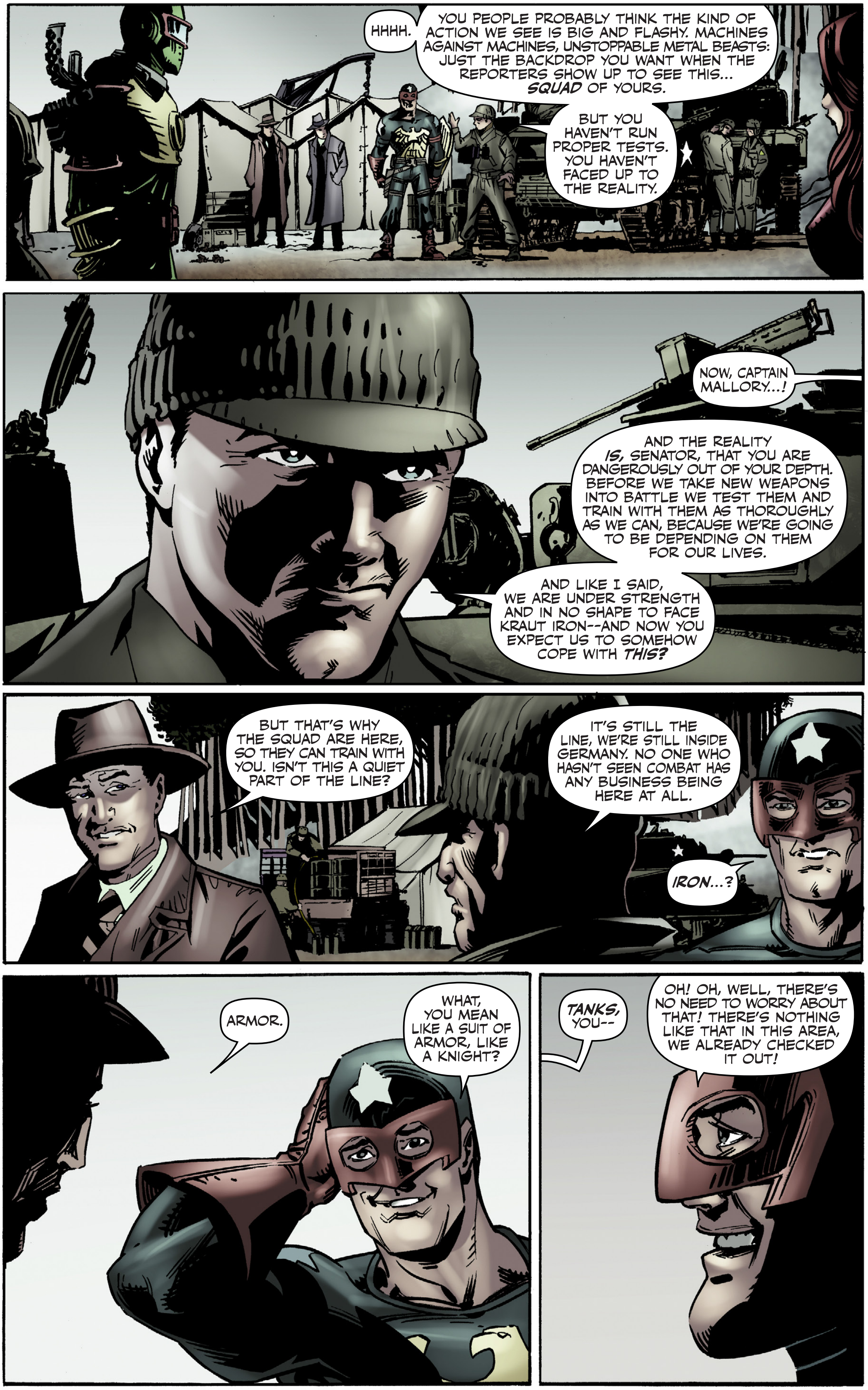
BARBARY COAST

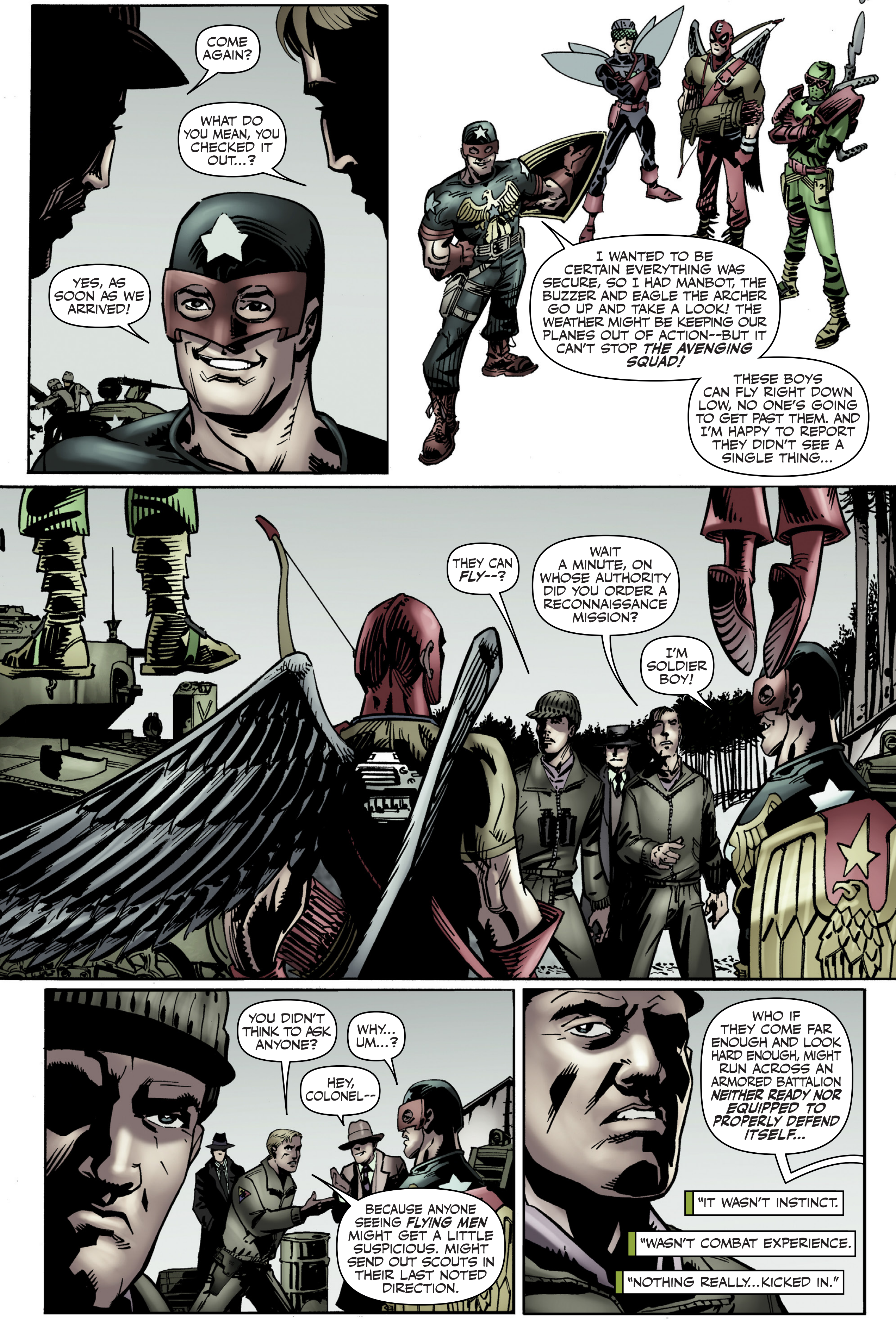
part two

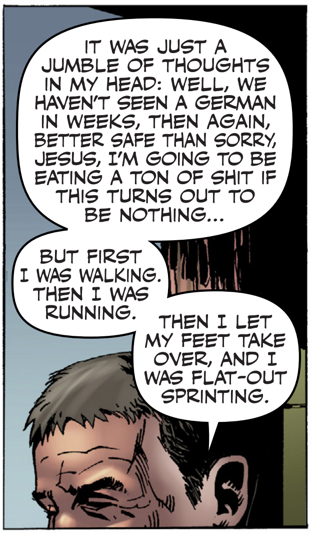

UH...?
OFFICERS GET SALUTED: OFFICERS GET SHOT.
"AVENGING SQUAD"?
THAT ISN'T FINAL. THE THEME WILL EITHER BE REVENGE OR JUSTICE, WE'RE STILL TRYING TO DECIDE.
WE BEING THE BOYS AT V.A.C.
CORRECT.
YOU'RE LOOKING AT THE RESULTS OF FIVE YEARS' WORK BY OUR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT'S MOST BRILLIANT MINDS. HUMAN BEINGS *ADAPTED BY SCIENCE*--TO BE STRONGER, SMARTER AND FASTER THAN ANY OTHER SOLDIER ON THE BATTLEFIELD.
THIS IS THE FUTURE, CAPTAIN MALLORY. YOU WOULD DO WELL TO EMBRACE IT.
SO THIS IS THEIR FIRST GO AT *V*...
MORE OR LESS. VOGELBAUM CAME OUT OF GERMANY IN 'THIRTY-EIGHT, HE'D ALREADY BEEN WORKING ON IT FOR A WHILE.
WELL HERE'S WHAT I'M EMBRACING RIGHT NOW, MISTER NEUMAN: SIXTH BATTALION IS SERIOUSLY UNDER STRENGTH IN PERSONNEL AND STANDS AT BARELY ONE THIRD ITS REGULAR COMPLEMENT OF TANKS. WHAT WE DO HAVE ARE NEW AND UNFAMILIAR; WE HAVEN'T EVEN STARTED WORKING OUT THE BUGS IN THEM.
CAN YOU EXPLAIN TO ME HOW THE FUTURE'S GOING TO HELP WITH ANY OF THAT?

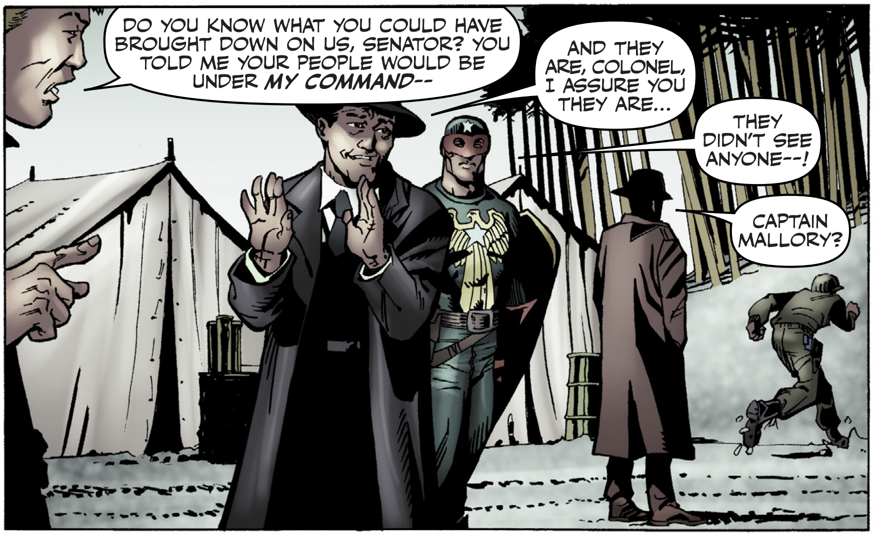

HNNNHHRRRRNNNNHHHH
NNNAAAAAAAARRRRRHHHH
GO ON, STEEL KNIGHT!
SO...THEY CAN...?
LIFT IT. FLIP IT OVER, IF THEY SO CHOOSE.
BABY BELL
WHUFF!!

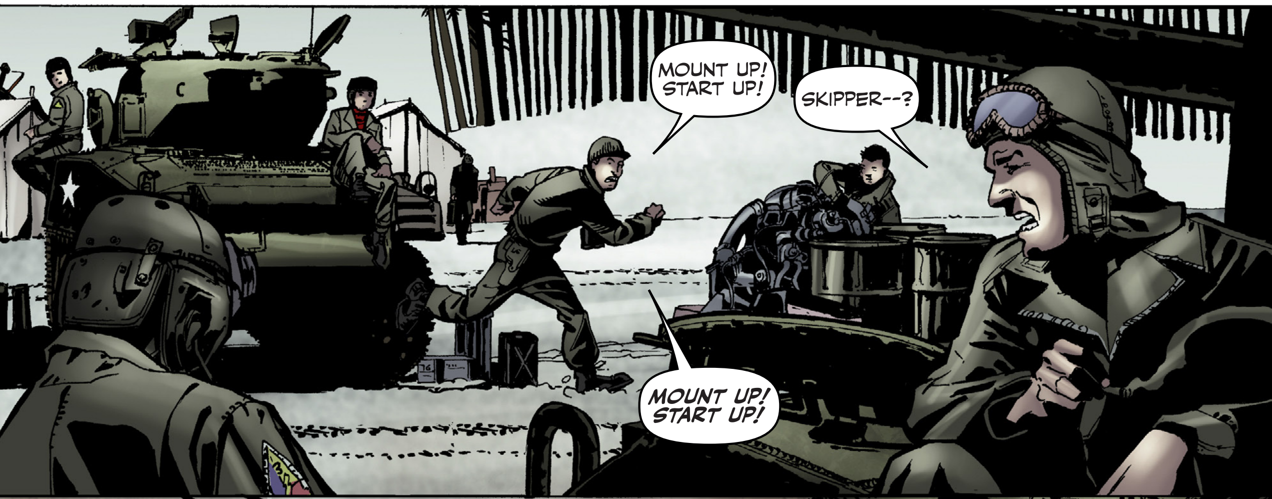

TH-TH-THANKS, LADDIO--!
YOU *BETCHA,* PARTNER!
IS THAT IT?
FOR NOW.
I'M NOT SAYING THAT MEN LIFTING A THIRTY-SIX TON SHERMAN A FOOT OFF THE GROUND IS SOMETHING YOU SEE EVERY DAY, BUT SOME OF THE GERMAN TANKS WEIGH ALMOST TWICE THAT. AND THEY WILL BE SHOOTING AT YOU AT THE TIME, DON'T FORGET.
LET THEM. THE CRIMSON COUNTESS CAN *MELT TANKS* WITH HER POWER BLASTS.
SAY THE WORD...
NOT ONE OF OURS, IF YOU DON'T MIND. HOW CAREFULLY HAVE YOU THOUGHT THIS THROUGH?
I BEG YOUR PARDON--?
GREG...
BETTY
LOOK-- I'M NOT SAYING--
HEY! SKIPPER! WHO ARE YOUR NEW BUDDIES?
YOUR CREW LIKELY TO PASS MUSTER AT THE NEXT INSPECTION, *SERGEANT?!*

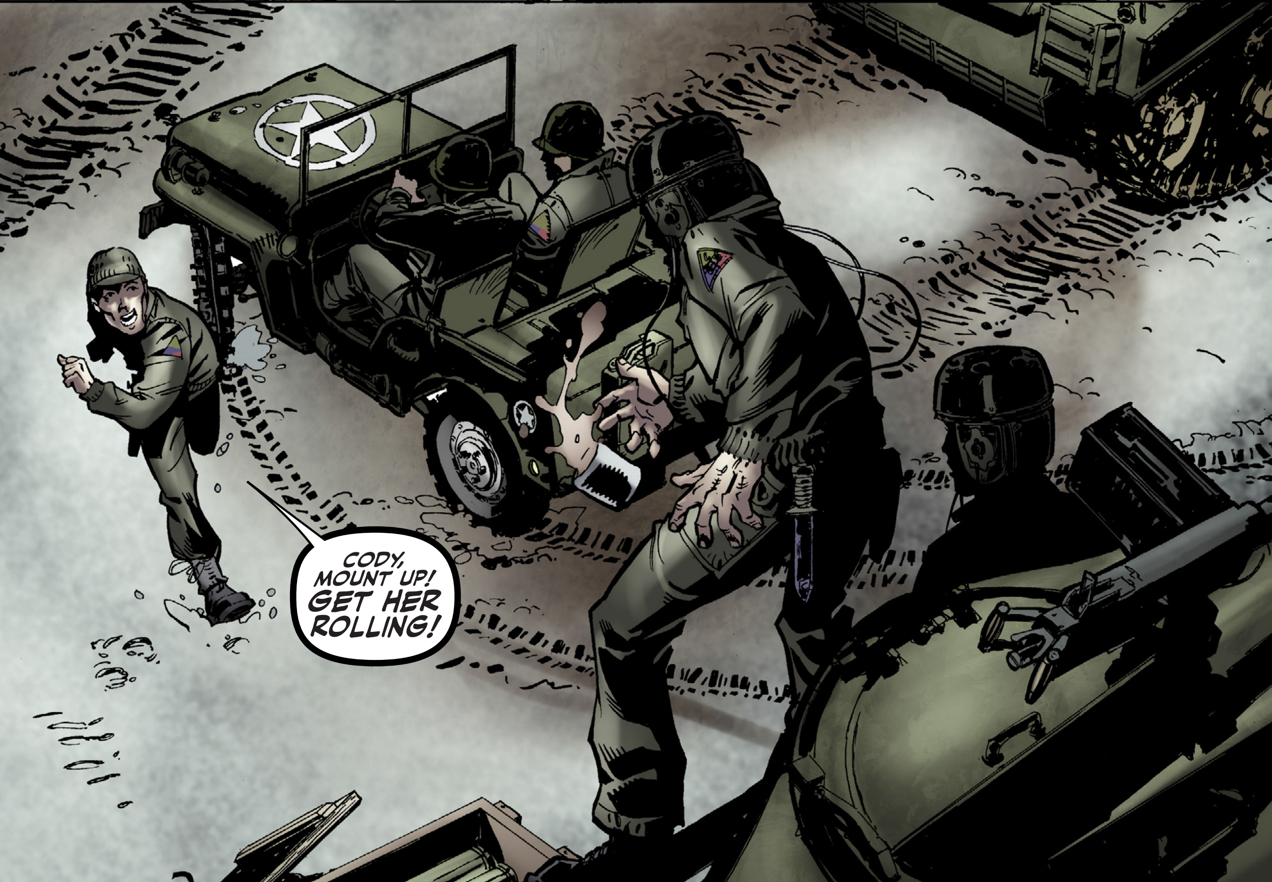

HHHH.
YOU PEOPLE PROBABLY THINK THE KIND OF ACTION WE SEE IS BIG AND FLASHY. MACHINES AGAINST MACHINES, UNSTOPPABLE METAL BEASTS: JUST THE BACKDROP YOU WANT WHEN THE REPORTERS SHOW UP TO SEE THIS... *SQUAD* OF YOURS.
BUT YOU HAVEN'T RUN PROPER TESTS. YOU HAVEN'T FACED UP TO THE REALITY.
NOW, CAPTAIN MALLORY...!
AND THE REALITY *IS,* SENATOR, THAT YOU ARE DANGEROUSLY OUT OF YOUR DEPTH. BEFORE WE TAKE NEW WEAPONS INTO BATTLE WE TEST THEM AND TRAIN WITH THEM AS THOROUGHLY AS WE CAN, BECAUSE WE'RE GOING TO BE DEPENDING ON THEM FOR OUR LIVES.
AND LIKE I SAID, WE ARE UNDER STRENGTH AND IN NO SHAPE TO FACE KRAUT IRON--AND NOW YOU EXPECT US TO SOMEHOW COPE WITH *THIS?*
BUT THAT'S WHY THE SQUAD ARE HERE, SO THEY CAN TRAIN WITH YOU. ISN'T THIS A QUIET PART OF THE LINE?
IT'S STILL THE LINE, WE'RE STILL INSIDE GERMANY. NO ONE WHO HASN'T SEEN COMBAT HAS ANY BUSINESS BEING HERE AT ALL.
IRON...?
ARMOR.
WHAT, YOU MEAN LIKE A SUIT OF ARMOR, LIKE A KNIGHT?
TANKS, YOU--
OH! OH, WELL, THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THAT! THERE'S NOTHING LIKE THAT IN THIS AREA, WE ALREADY CHECKED IT OUT!

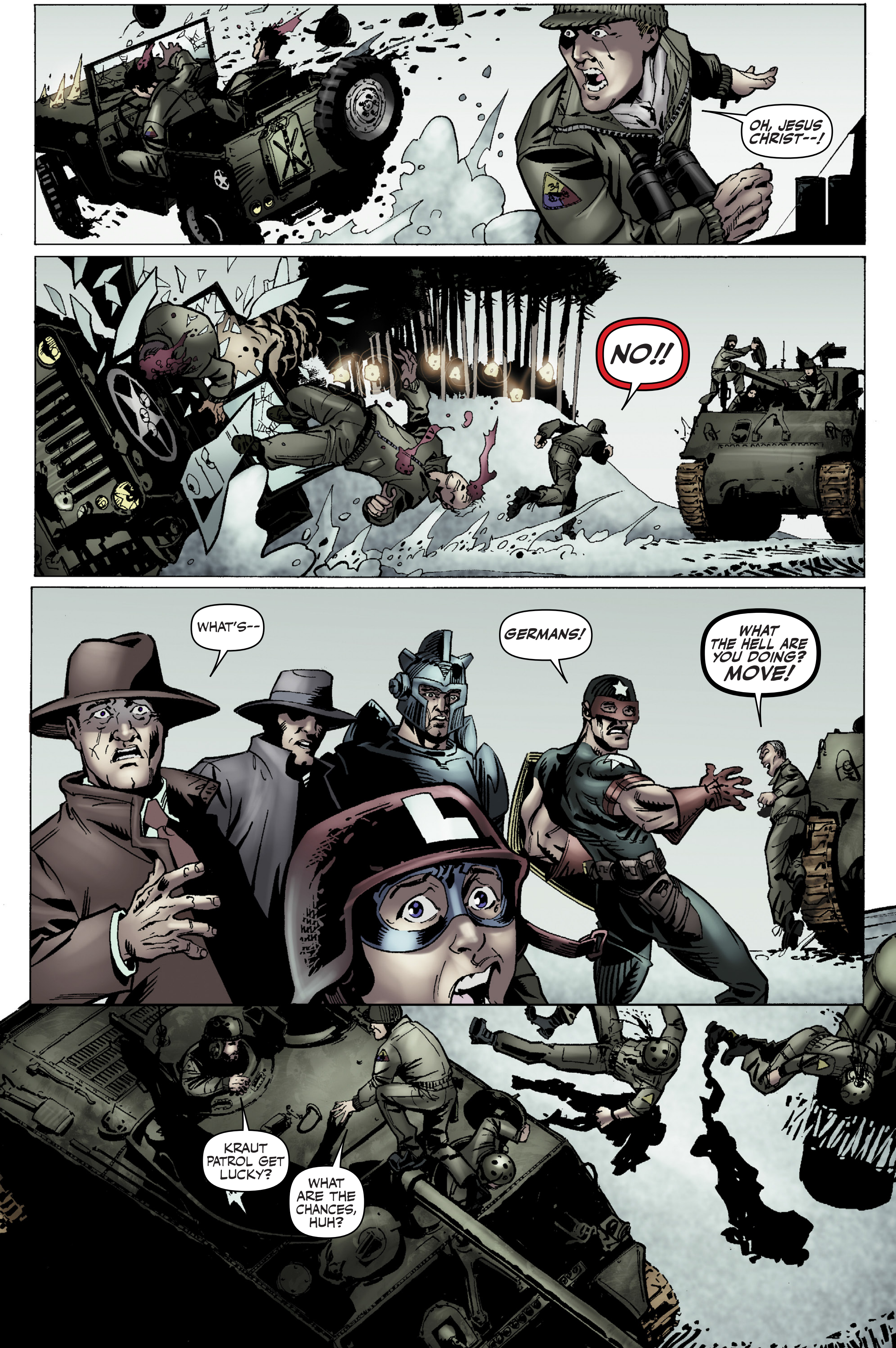

COME AGAIN?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU CHECKED IT OUT...?
YES, AS SOON AS WE ARRIVED!
I WANTED TO BE CERTAIN EVERYTHING WAS SECURE, SO I HAD MANBOT, THE BUZZER AND EAGLE THE ARCHER GO UP AND TAKE A LOOK! THE WEATHER MIGHT BE KEEPING OUR PLANES OUT OF ACTION--BUT IT CAN'T STOP ***THE AVENGING SQUAD!***
THESE BOYS CAN FLY RIGHT DOWN LOW, NO ONE'S GOING TO GET PAST THEM. AND I'M HAPPY TO REPORT THEY DIDN'T SEE A SINGLE THING...
THEY CAN *FLY*--?
WAIT A MINUTE, ON WHOSE AUTHORITY DID YOU ORDER A RECONNAISSANCE MISSION?
I'M SOLDIER BOY!
YOU DIDN'T THINK TO ASK ANYONE?
WHY... UM...?
HEY, COLONEL--
BECAUSE ANYONE SEEING ***FLYING MEN*** MIGHT GET A LITTLE SUSPICIOUS. MIGHT SEND OUT SCOUTS IN THEIR LAST NOTED DIRECTION.
WHO IF THEY COME FAR ENOUGH AND LOOK HARD ENOUGH, MIGHT RUN ACROSS AN ARMORED BATTALION ***NEITHER READY NOR EQUIPPED TO PROPERLY DEFEND ITSELF...***
"IT WASN'T INSTINCT.
"WASN'T COMBAT EXPERIENCE.
"NOTHING REALLY...KICKED IN."

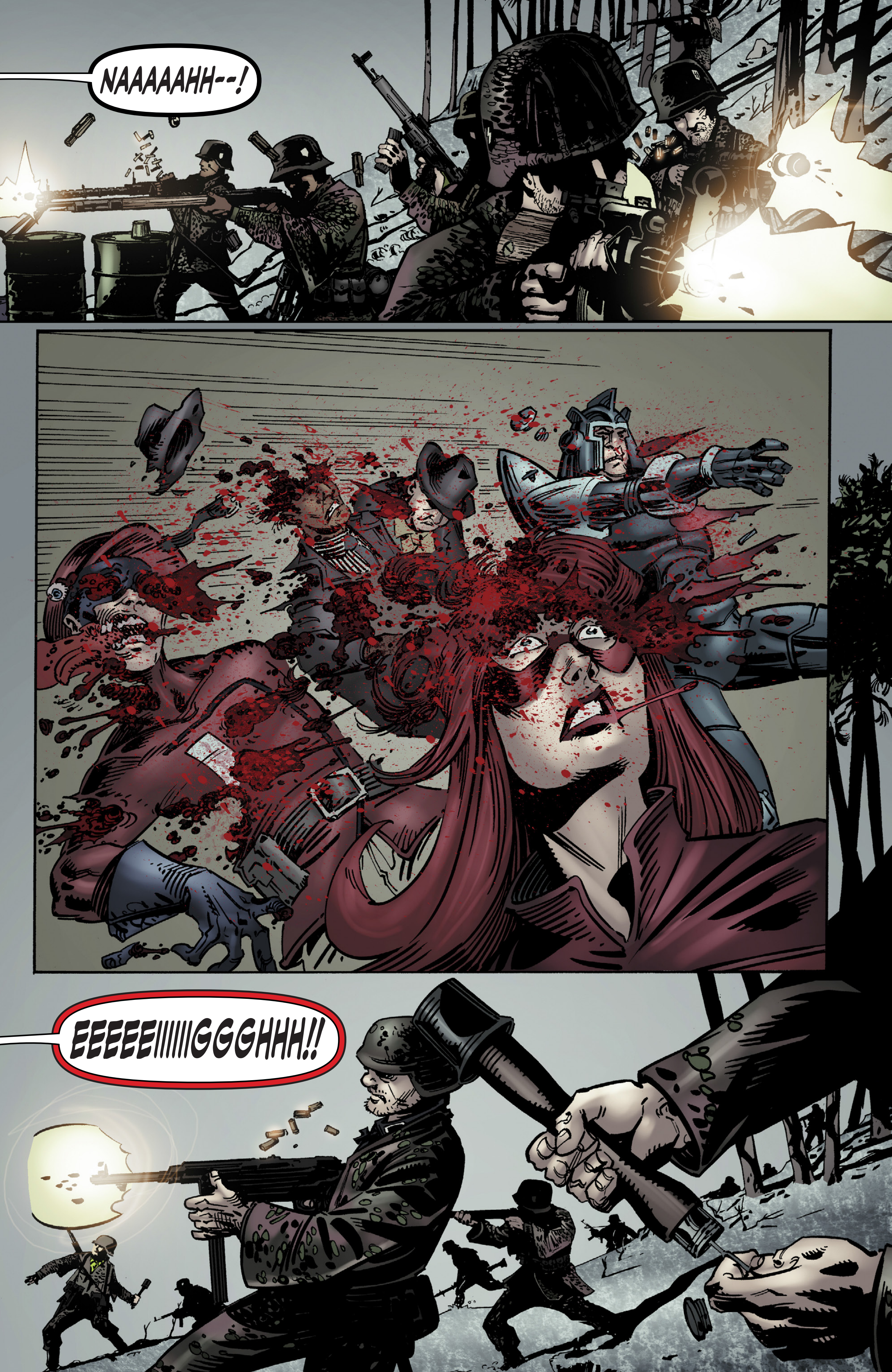

IT WAS JUST A JUMBLE OF THOUGHTS IN MY HEAD: WELL, WE HAVEN'T SEEN A GERMAN IN WEEKS, THEN AGAIN, BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY, JESUS, I'M GOING TO BE EATING A TON OF SHIT IF THIS TURNS OUT TO BE NOTHING...
BUT FIRST I WAS WALKING. THEN I WAS RUNNING.
THEN I LET MY FEET TAKE OVER, AND I WAS FLAT-OUT SPRINTING.

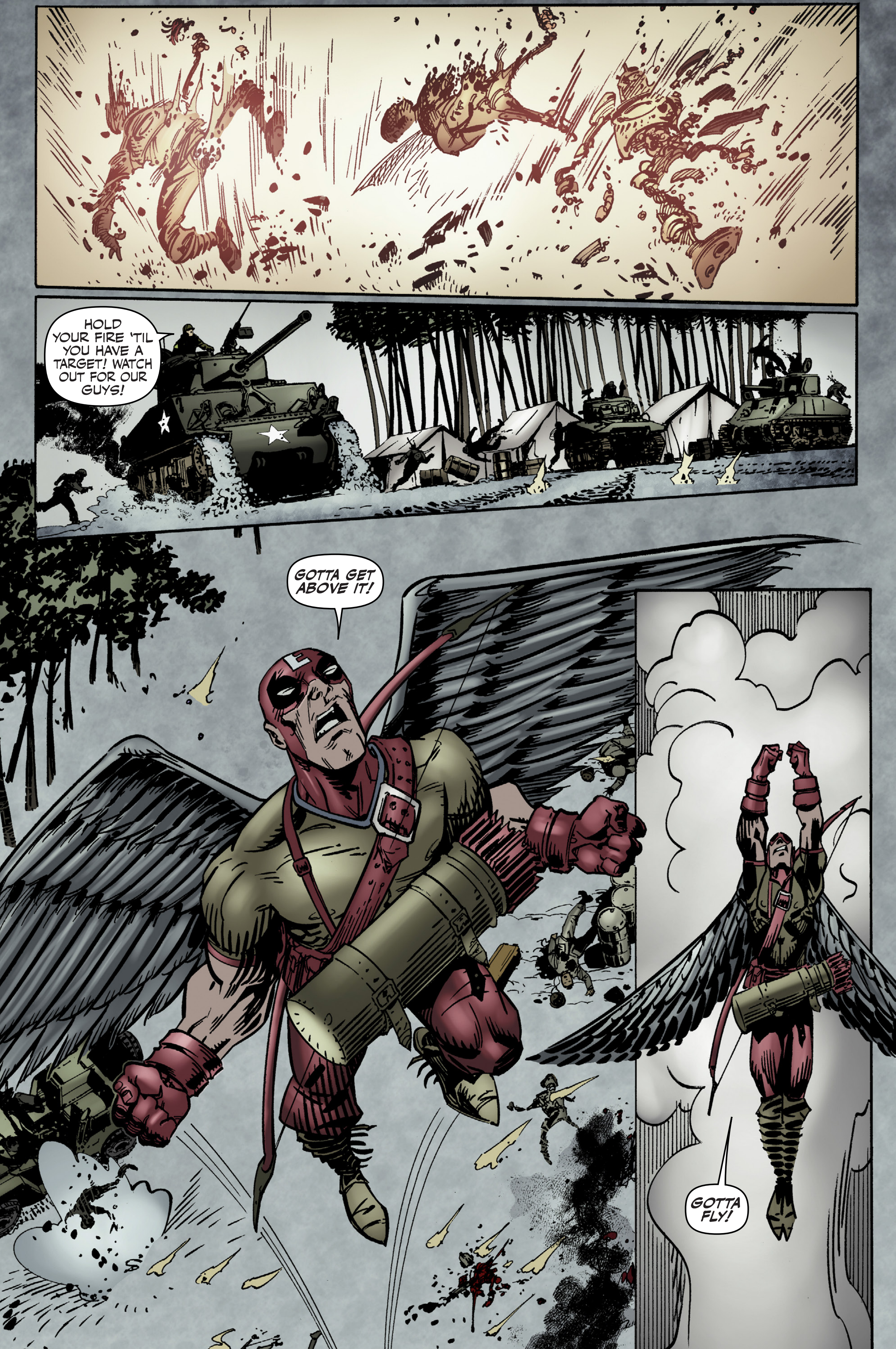

DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU COULD HAVE BROUGHT DOWN ON US, SENATOR? YOU TOLD ME YOUR PEOPLE WOULD BE UNDER *MY COMMAND*--
AND THEY ARE, COLONEL, I ASSURE YOU THEY ARE...
THEY DIDN'T SEE ANYONE--!
CAPTAIN MALLORY?

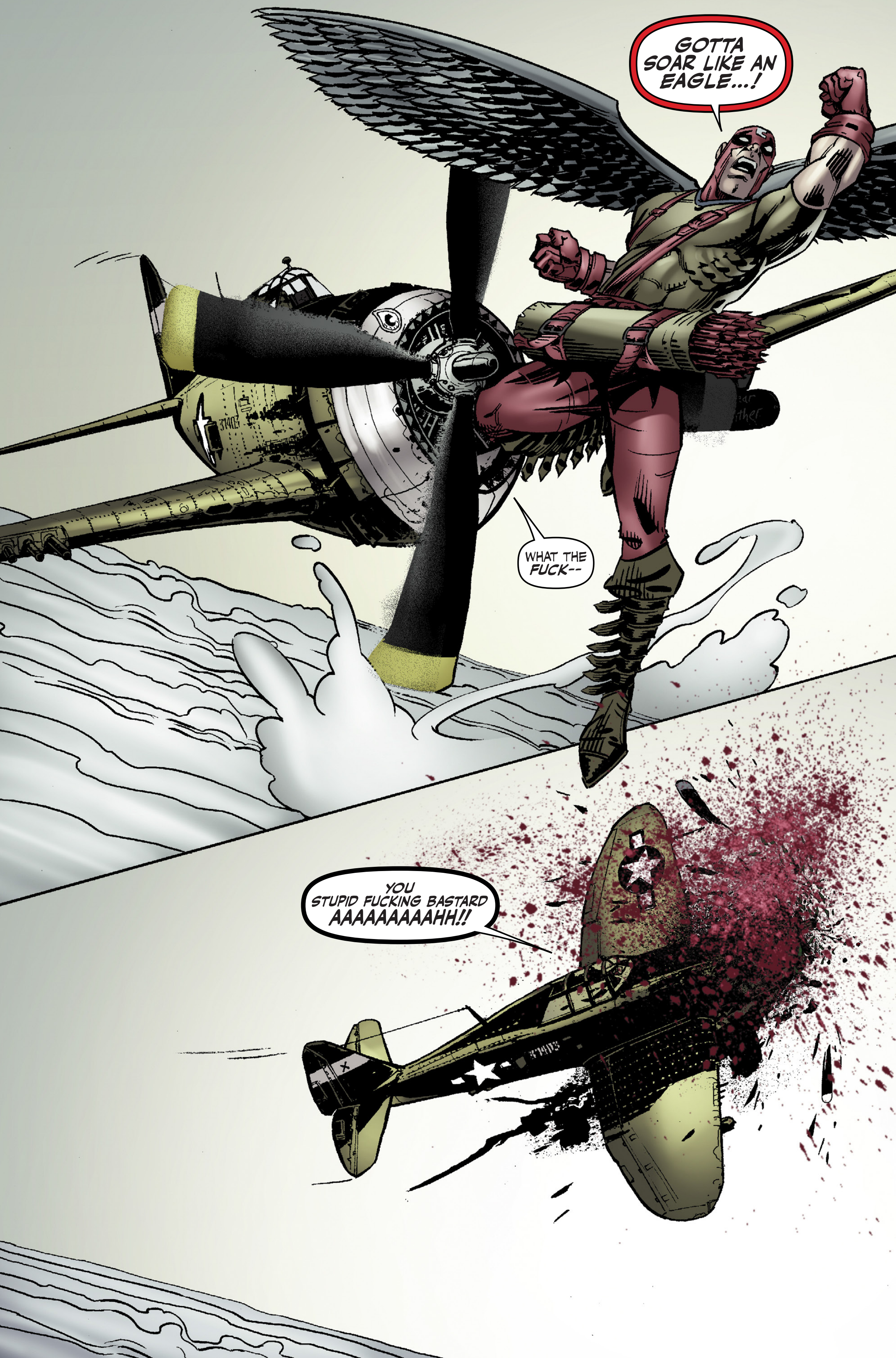

MOUNT UP! START UP!
SKIPPER--?
MOUNT UP! START UP!

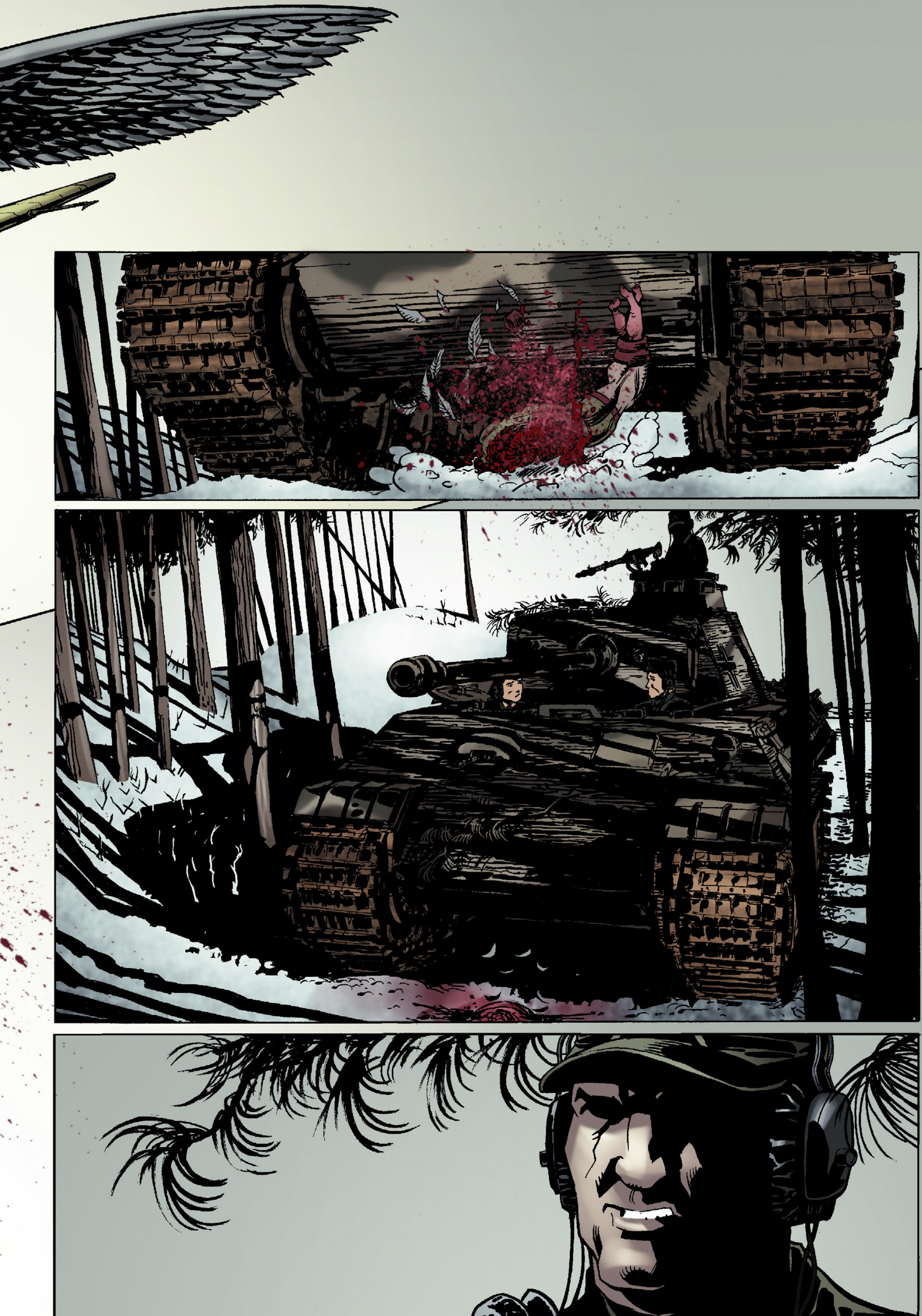

CODY, MOUNT UP! GET HER ROLLING!

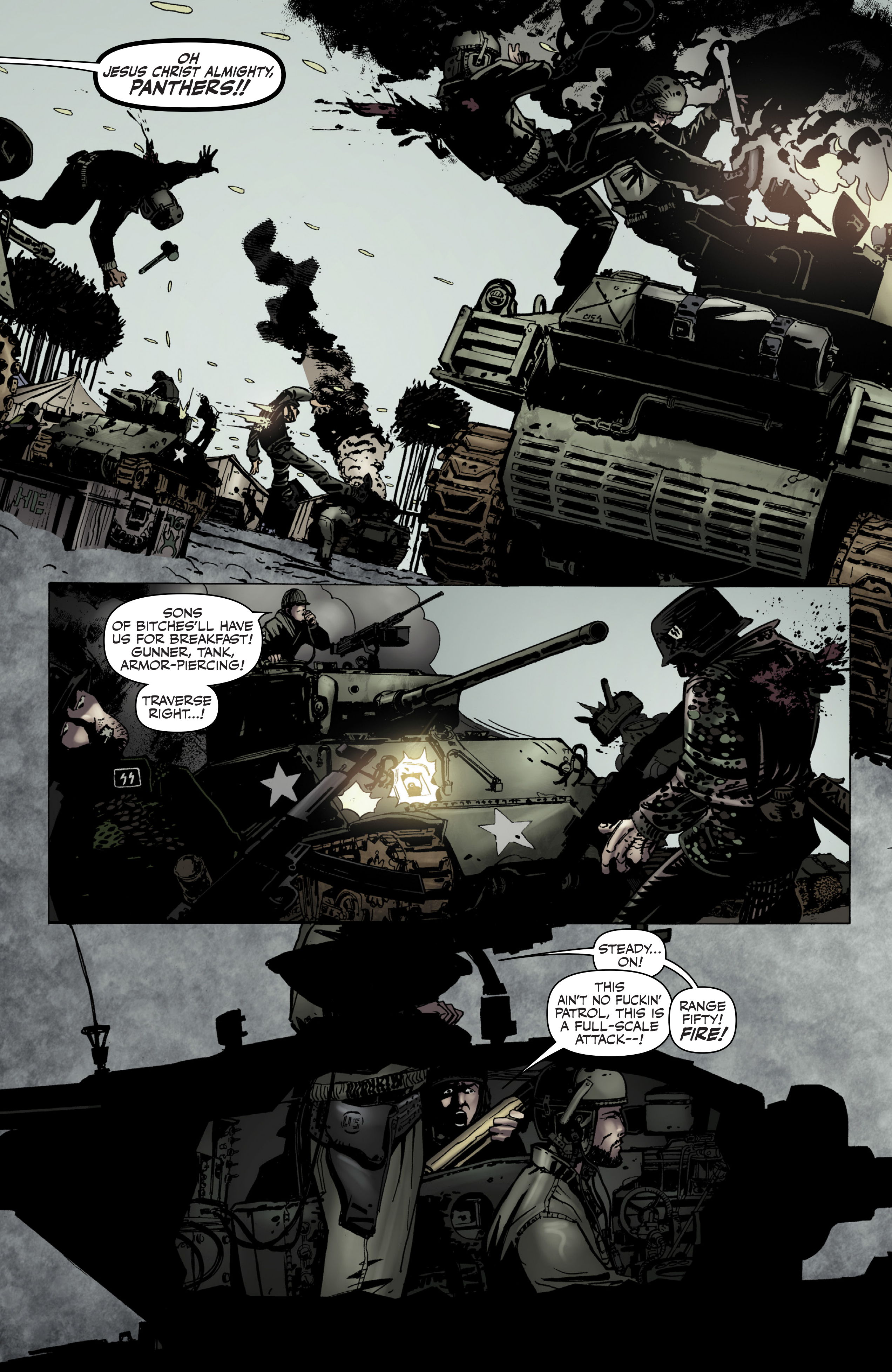

OH, JESUS CHRIST--!
NO!!
WHAT'S--
GERMANS!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING? MOVE!
KRAUT PATROL GET LUCKY?
WHAT ARE THE CHANCES, HUH?

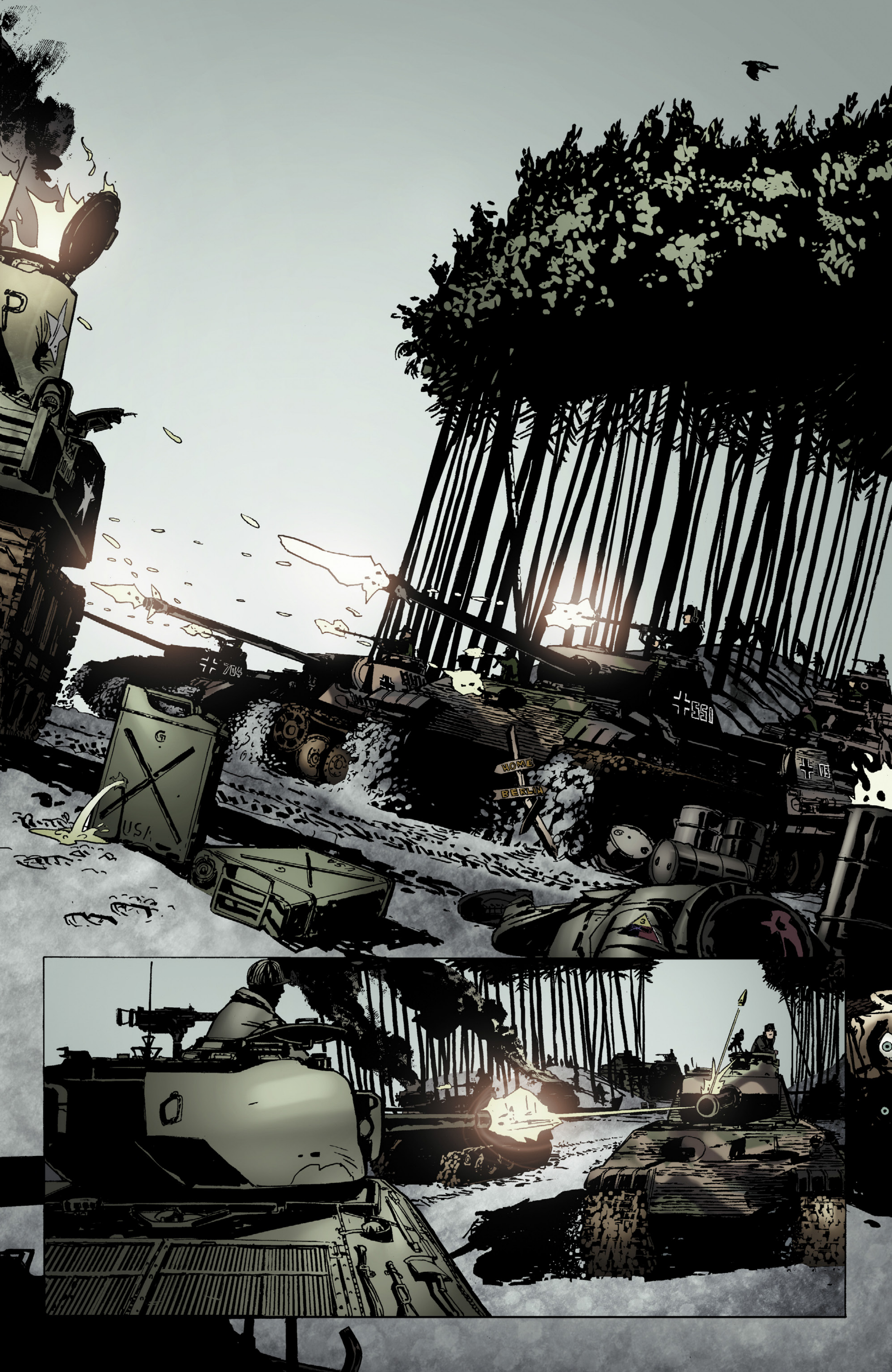

NAAAAAHH--!
EEEEEIIIIIIIIIGGGHHH!!

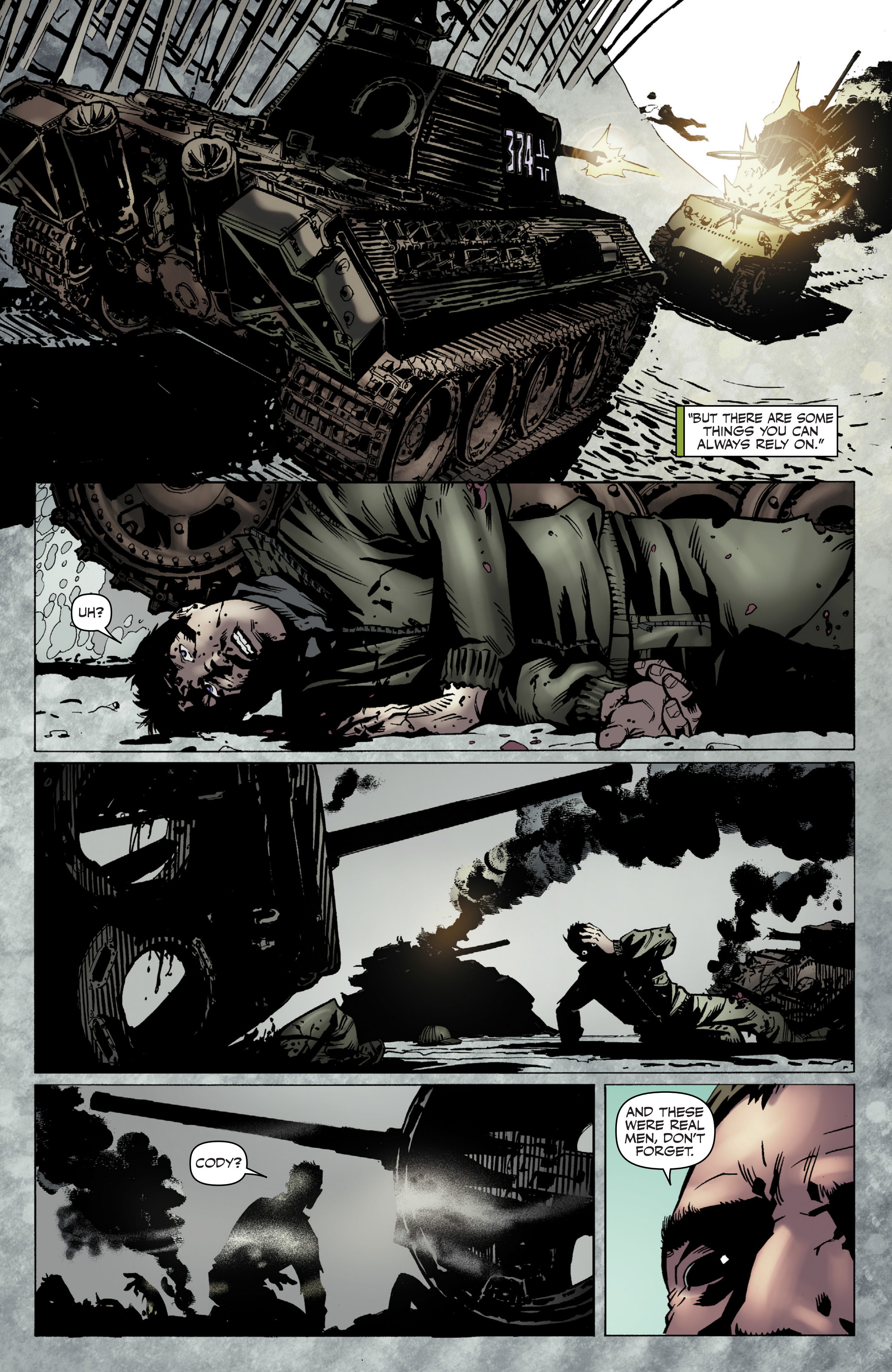

HOLD YOUR FIRE 'TIL YOU HAVE A TARGET! WATCH OUT FOR OUR GUYS!
GOTTA GET ABOVE IT!
GOTTA FLY!

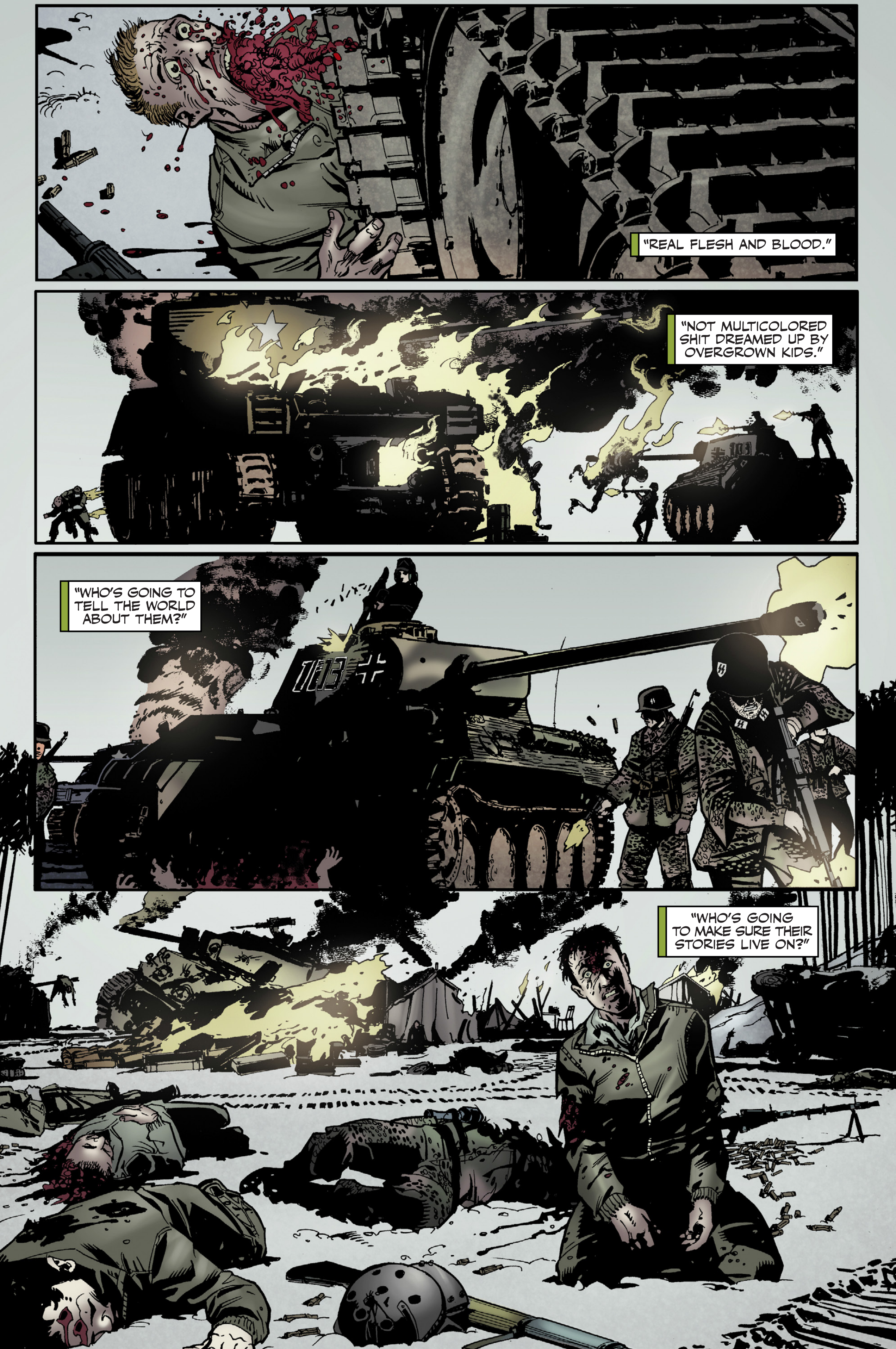

GOTTA SOAR LIKE AN EAGLE...!
WHAT THE FUCK--
YOU STUPID FUCKING BASTARD AAAAAAAAAAHH!!

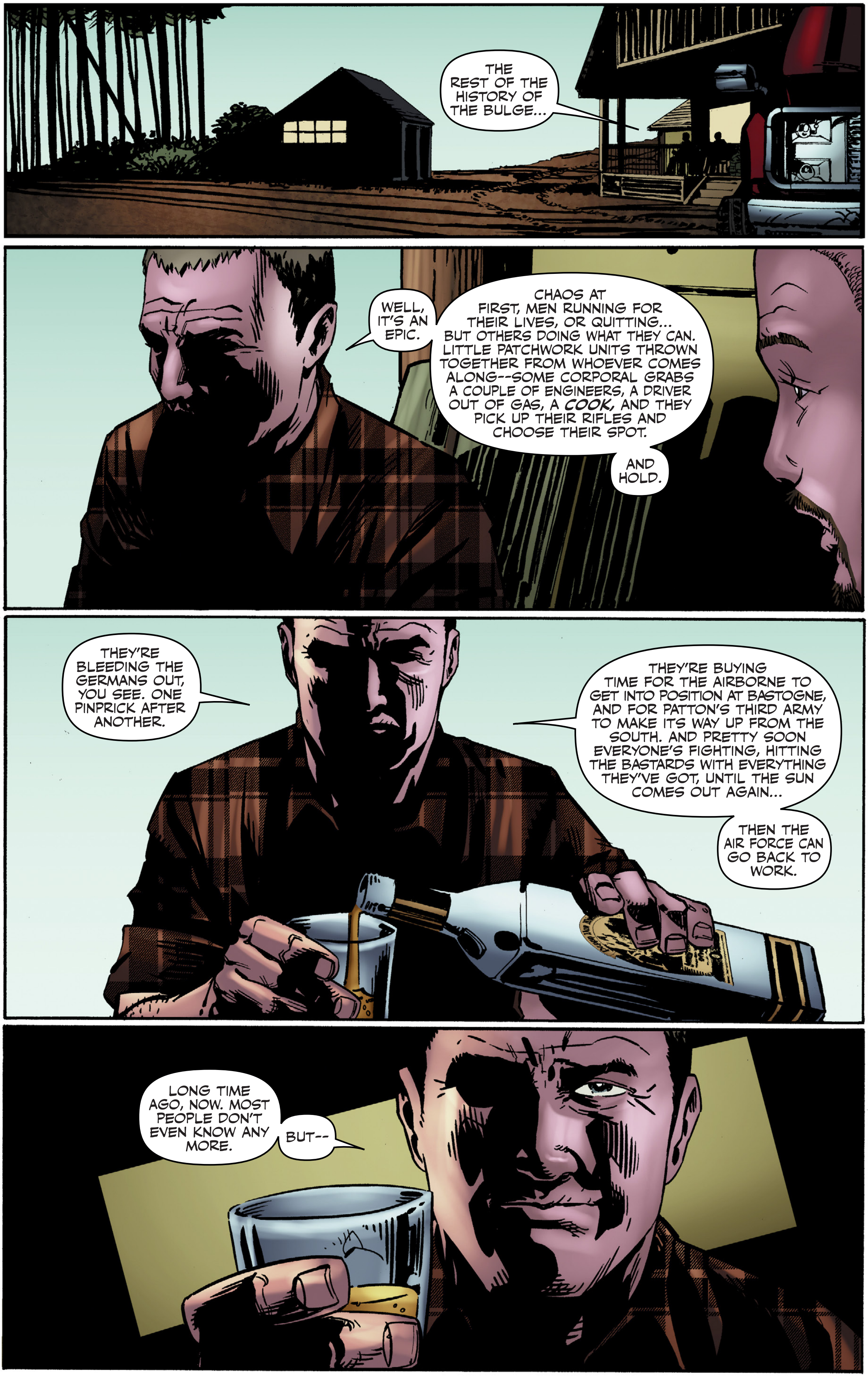


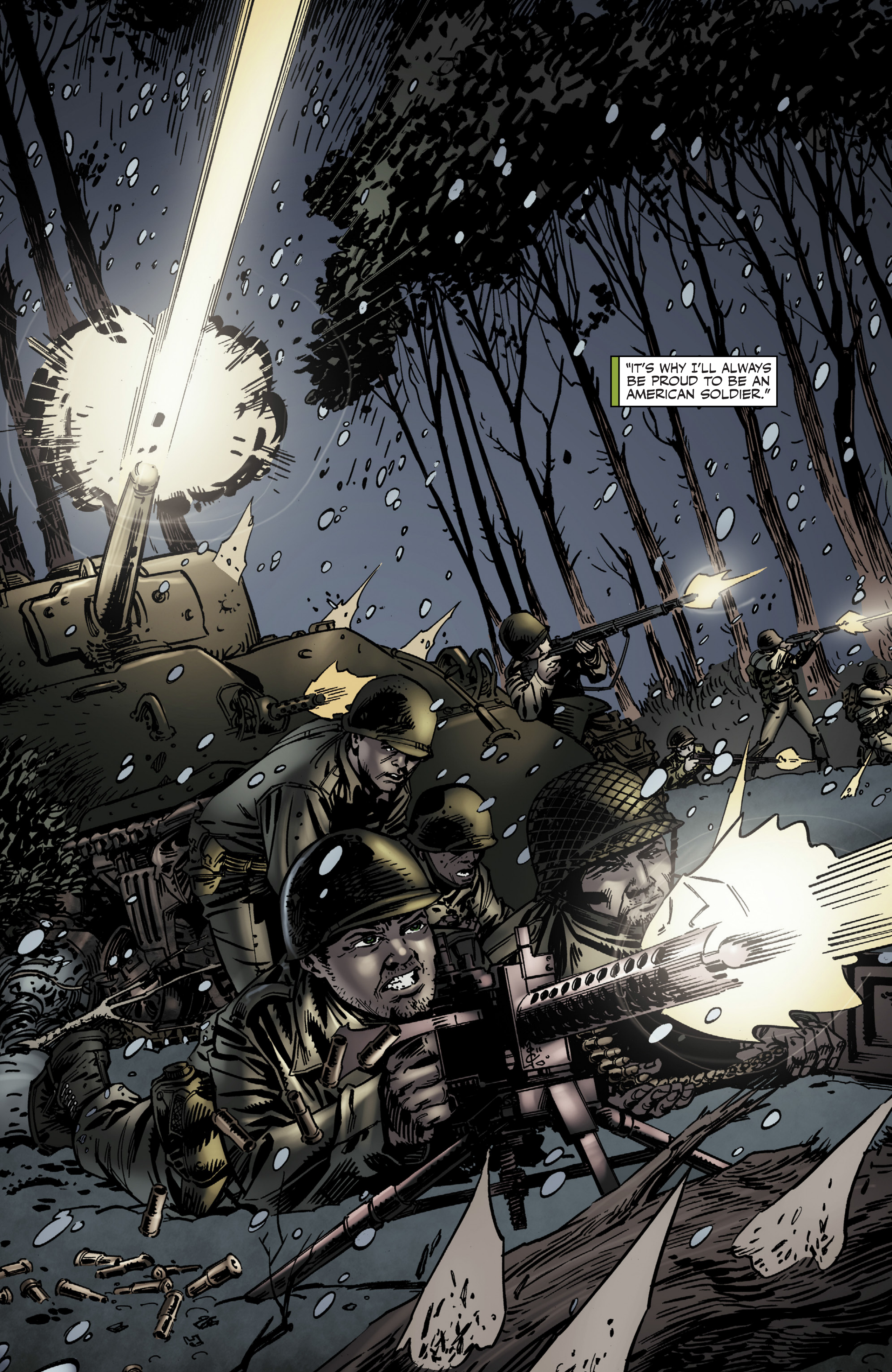

OH JESUS CHRIST ALMIGHTY, **PANTHERS!!**
SONS OF BITCHES'LL HAVE US FOR BREAKFAST! GUNNER, TANK, ARMOR-PIERCING!
TRAVERSE RIGHT...!
STEADY... ON!
THIS AIN'T NO FUCKIN' PATROL, THIS IS A FULL-SCALE ATTACK--!
RANGE FIFTY! ***FIRE!***

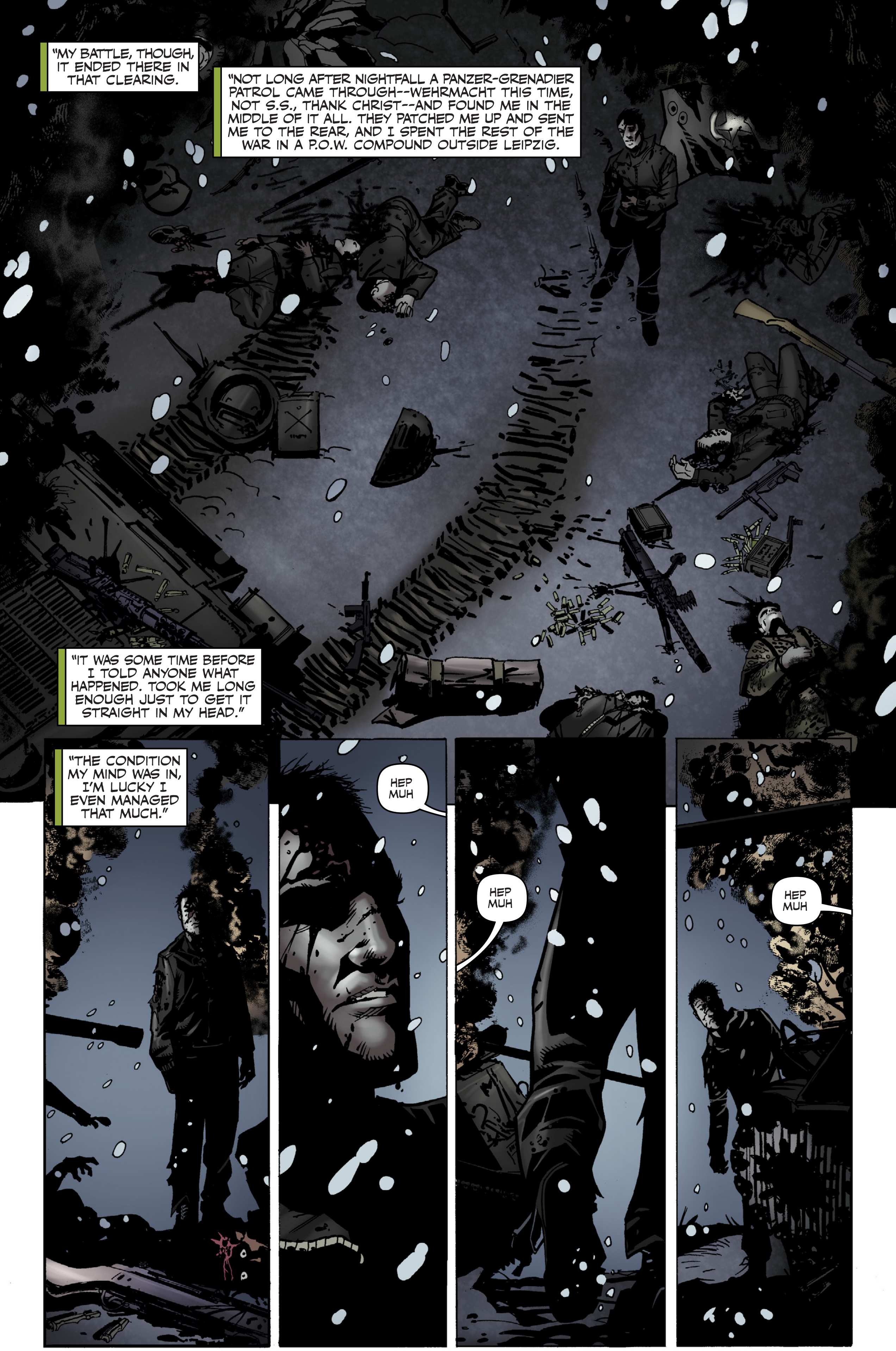

704
551
113
HOME
BERLIN
G
USA
3

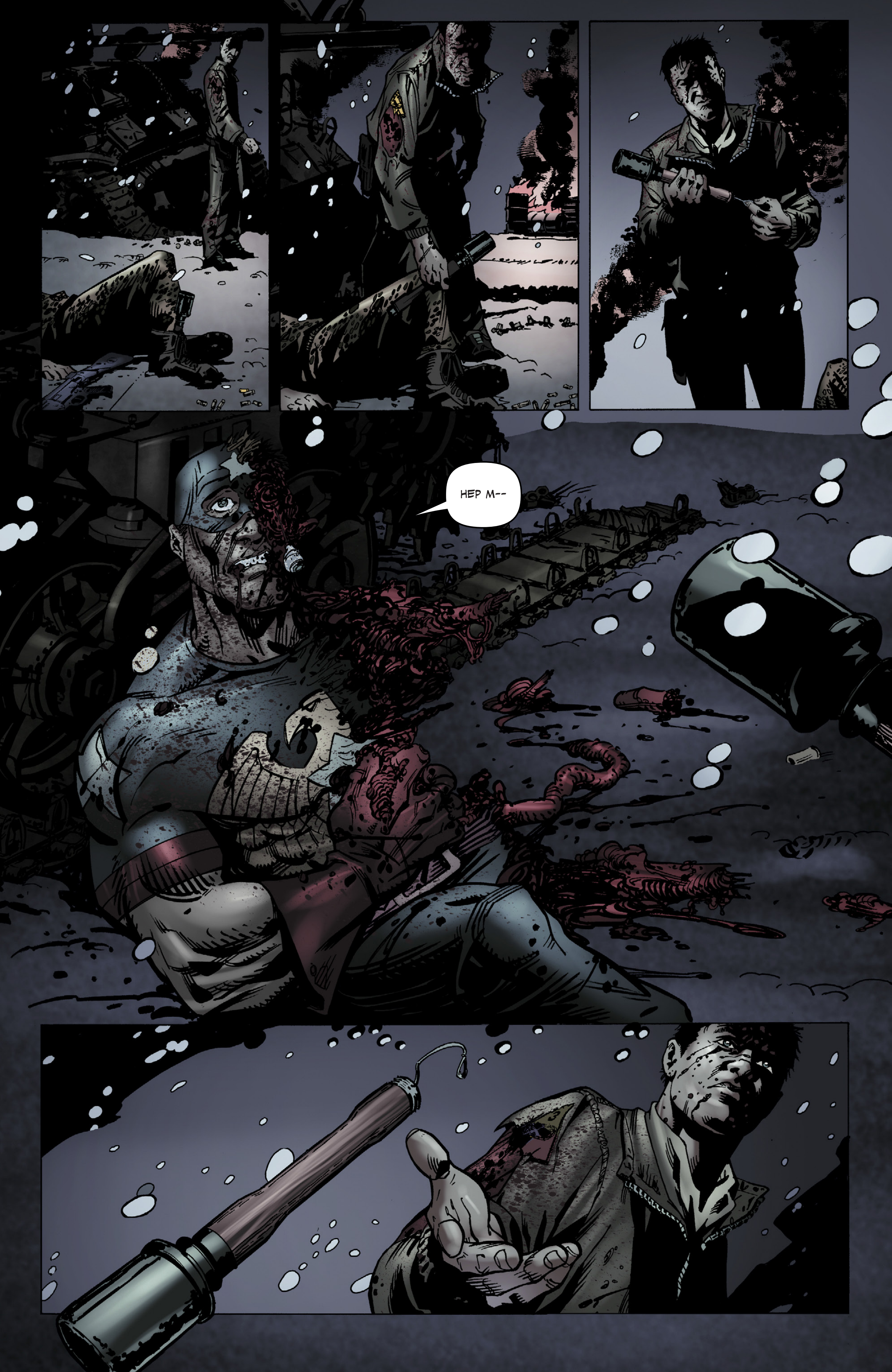

374
"BUT THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN ALWAYS RELY ON."
UH?
CODY?
AND THESE WERE REAL MEN, DON'T FORGET.

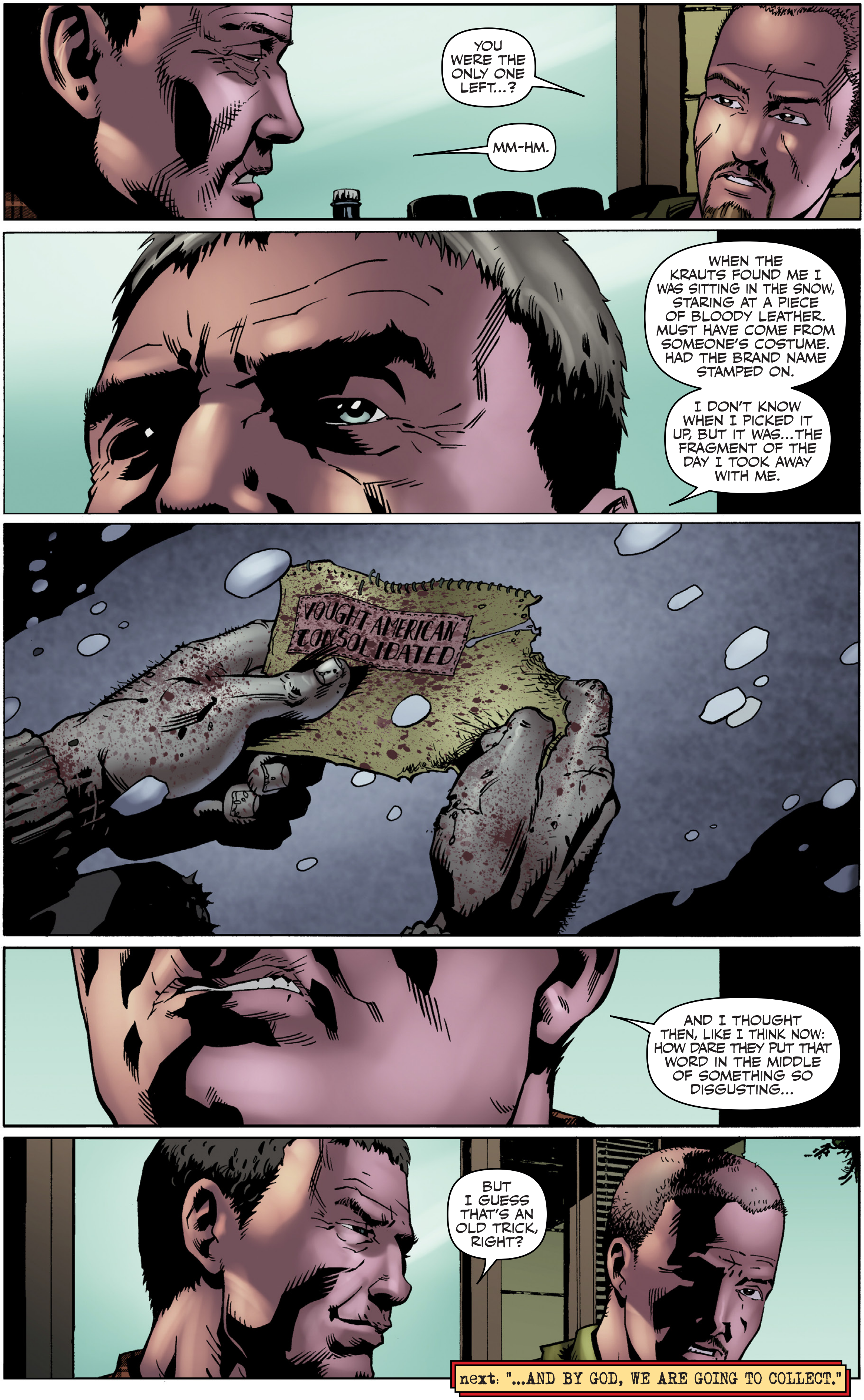

"REAL FLESH AND BLOOD."
"NOT MULTICOLORED SHIT DREAMED UP BY OVERGROWN KIDS."
"WHO'S GOING TO TELL THE WORLD ABOUT THEM?"
"WHO'S GOING TO MAKE SURE THEIR STORIES LIVE ON?"


THE REST OF THE HISTORY OF THE BULGE...
WELL, IT'S AN EPIC.
CHAOS AT FIRST, MEN RUNNING FOR THEIR LIVES, OR QUITTING... BUT OTHERS DOING WHAT THEY CAN. LITTLE PATCHWORK UNITS THROWN TOGETHER FROM WHOEVER COMES ALONG--SOME CORPORAL GRABS A COUPLE OF ENGINEERS, A DRIVER OUT OF GAS, A *COOK,* AND THEY PICK UP THEIR RIFLES AND CHOOSE THEIR SPOT.
AND HOLD.
THEY'RE BLEEDING THE GERMANS OUT, YOU SEE. ONE PINPRICK AFTER ANOTHER.
THEY'RE BUYING TIME FOR THE AIRBORNE TO GET INTO POSITION AT BASTOGNE, AND FOR PATTON'S THIRD ARMY TO MAKE ITS WAY UP FROM THE SOUTH. AND PRETTY SOON EVERYONE'S FIGHTING, HITTING THE BASTARDS WITH EVERYTHING THEY'VE GOT, UNTIL THE SUN COMES OUT AGAIN...
THEN THE AIR FORCE CAN GO BACK TO WORK.
LONG TIME AGO, NOW. MOST PEOPLE DON'T EVEN KNOW ANY MORE.
BUT--


"IT'S WHY I'LL ALWAYS BE PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN SOLDIER."

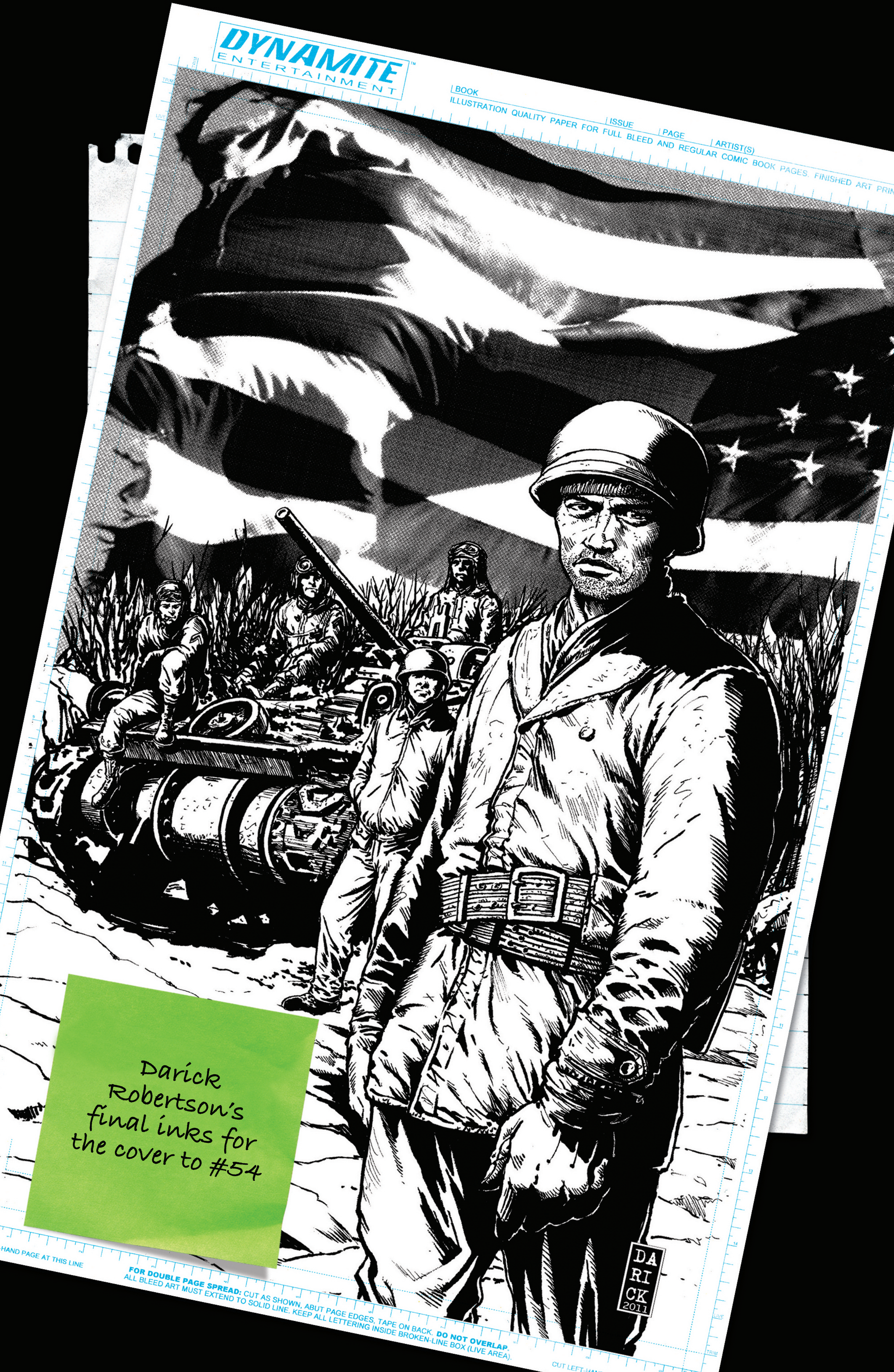

"MY BATTLE, THOUGH, IT ENDED THERE IN THAT CLEARING.
"NOT LONG AFTER NIGHTFALL A PANZER-GRENADIER PATROL CAME THROUGH--WEHRMACHT THIS TIME, NOT S.S., THANK CHRIST--AND FOUND ME IN THE MIDDLE OF IT ALL. THEY PATCHED ME UP AND SENT ME TO THE REAR, AND I SPENT THE REST OF THE WAR IN A P.O.W. COMPOUND OUTSIDE LEIPZIG.
"IT WAS SOME TIME BEFORE I TOLD ANYONE WHAT HAPPENED. TOOK ME LONG ENOUGH JUST TO GET IT STRAIGHT IN MY HEAD."
"THE CONDITION MY MIND WAS IN, I'M LUCKY I EVEN MANAGED THAT MUCH."
HEP MUH
HEP MUH
HEP MUH


HEP M--

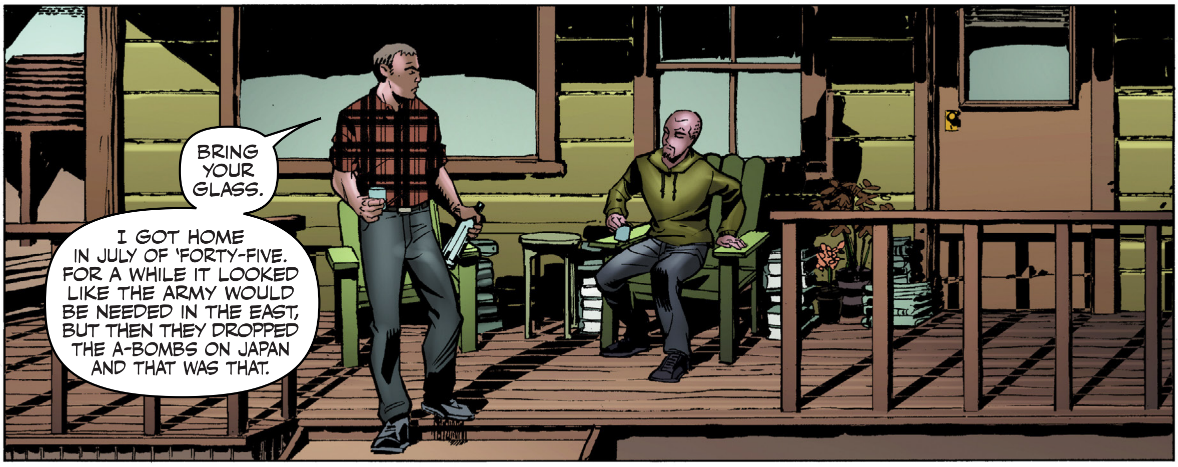

YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE LEFT...?
MM-HM.
WHEN THE KRAUTS FOUND ME I WAS SITTING IN THE SNOW, STARING AT A PIECE OF BLOODY LEATHER. MUST HAVE COME FROM SOMEONE'S COSTUME. HAD THE BRAND NAME STAMPED ON.
I DON'T KNOW WHEN I PICKED IT UP, BUT IT WAS...THE FRAGMENT OF THE DAY I TOOK AWAY WITH ME.
VOUGHT AMERICAN CONSOLIDATED
AND I THOUGHT THEN, LIKE I THINK NOW: HOW DARE THEY PUT THAT WORD IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING SO DISGUSTING...
BUT I GUESS THAT'S AN OLD TRICK, RIGHT?

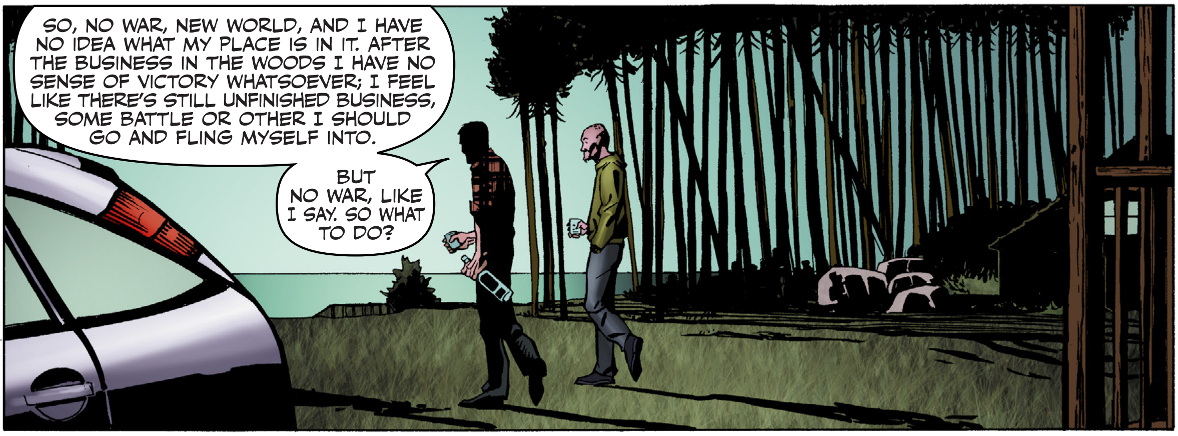
next: "...AND BY GOD, WE ARE GOING TO COLLECT."

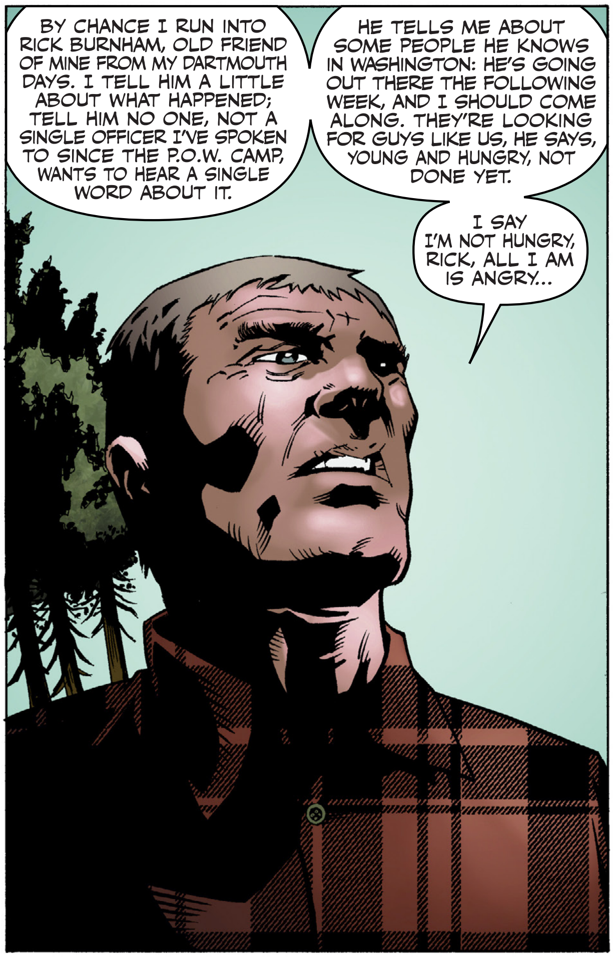
FIFTY-FOUR
DA RI CK 2011

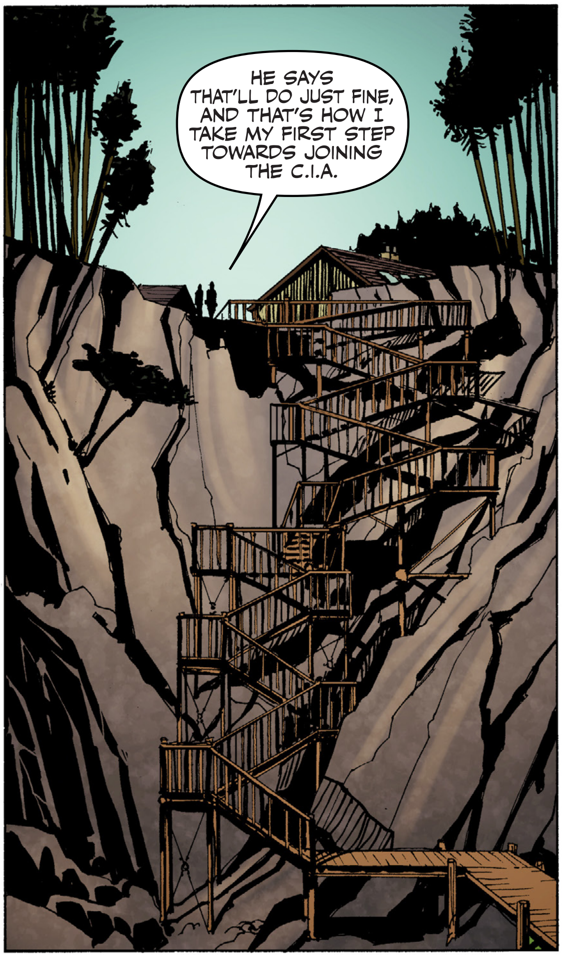

DYNAMITE ENTERTAINMENT
BOOK
ILLUSTRATION QUALITY PAPER FOR FULL BLEED AND REGULAR COMIC BOOK PAGES. FINISHED ART PRIN
ISSUE
PAGE
ARTIST(S)
HAND PAGE AT THIS LINE
FOR DOUBLE PAGE SPREAD: CUT AS SHOWN, ABUT PAGE EDGES, TAPE ON BACK. DO NOT OVERLAP.
ALL BLEED ART MUST EXTEND TO SOLID LINE. KEEP ALL LETTERING INSIDE BROKEN-LINE BOX (LIVE AREA).
CUT LEFT-HAN
TRIM
LIVE
DA
RI
CK
2011

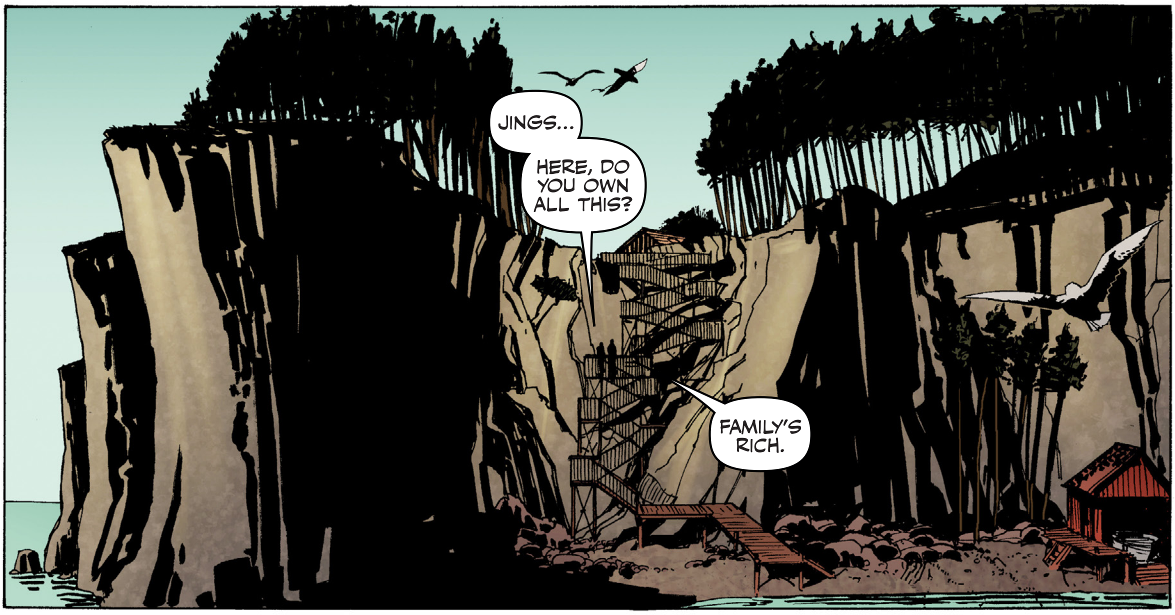
Darick Robertson's final inks for the cover to #54

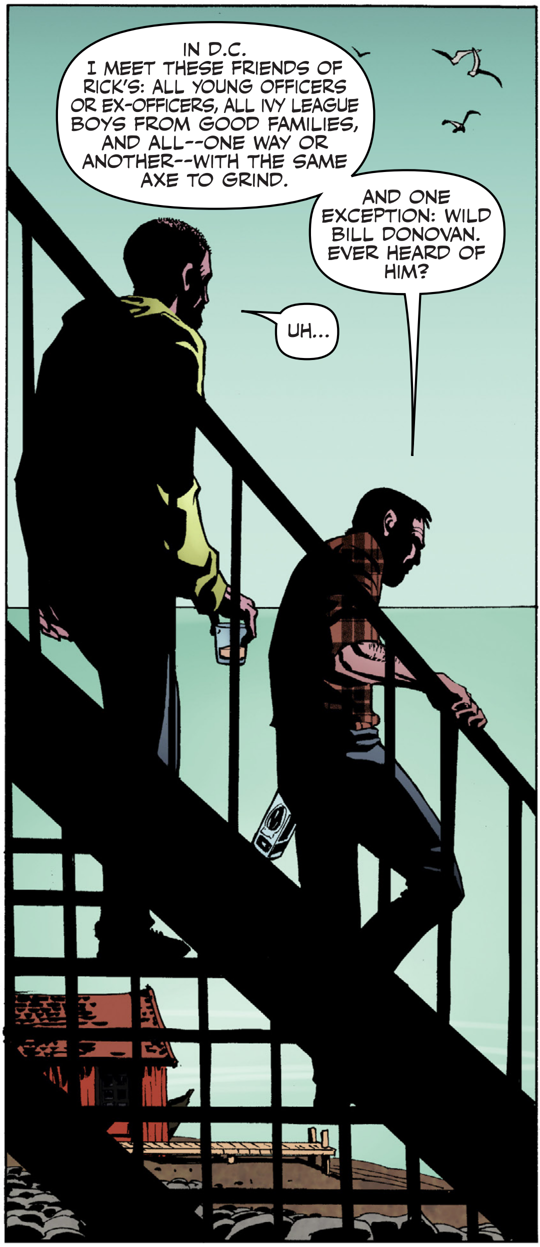

BRING YOUR GLASS.
I GOT HOME IN JULY OF 'FORTY-FIVE. FOR A WHILE IT LOOKED LIKE THE ARMY WOULD BE NEEDED IN THE EAST, BUT THEN THEY DROPPED THE A-BOMBS ON JAPAN AND THAT WAS THAT.

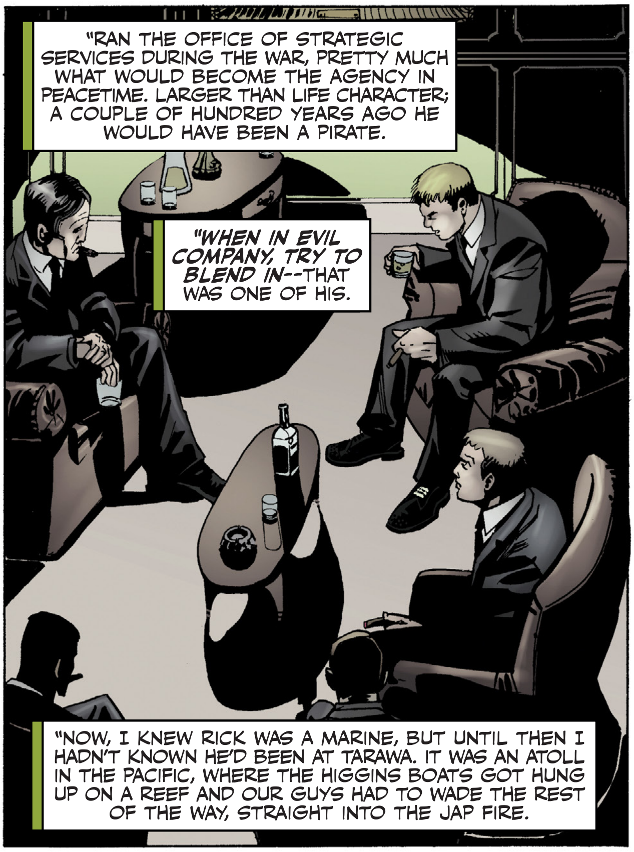

SO, NO WAR, NEW WORLD, AND I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT MY PLACE IS IN IT. AFTER THE BUSINESS IN THE WOODS I HAVE NO SENSE OF VICTORY WHATSOEVER; I FEEL LIKE THERE'S STILL UNFINISHED BUSINESS, SOME BATTLE OR OTHER I SHOULD GO AND FLING MYSELF INTO.
BUT NO WAR, LIKE I SAY. SO WHAT TO DO?

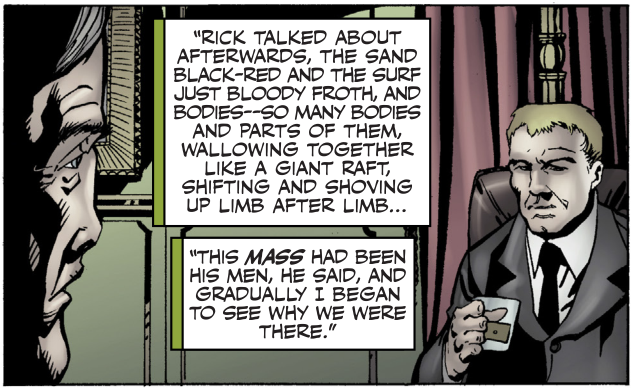

BY CHANCE I RUN INTO RICK BURNHAM, OLD FRIEND OF MINE FROM MY DARTMOUTH DAYS. I TELL HIM A LITTLE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED; TELL HIM NO ONE, NOT A SINGLE OFFICER I'VE SPOKEN TO SINCE THE P.O.W. CAMP, WANTS TO HEAR A SINGLE WORD ABOUT IT.
HE TELLS ME ABOUT SOME PEOPLE HE KNOWS IN WASHINGTON: HE'S GOING OUT THERE THE FOLLOWING WEEK, AND I SHOULD COME ALONG. THEY'RE LOOKING FOR GUYS LIKE US, HE SAYS, YOUNG AND HUNGRY, NOT DONE YET.
I SAY I'M NOT HUNGRY, RICK, ALL I AM IS ANGRY...

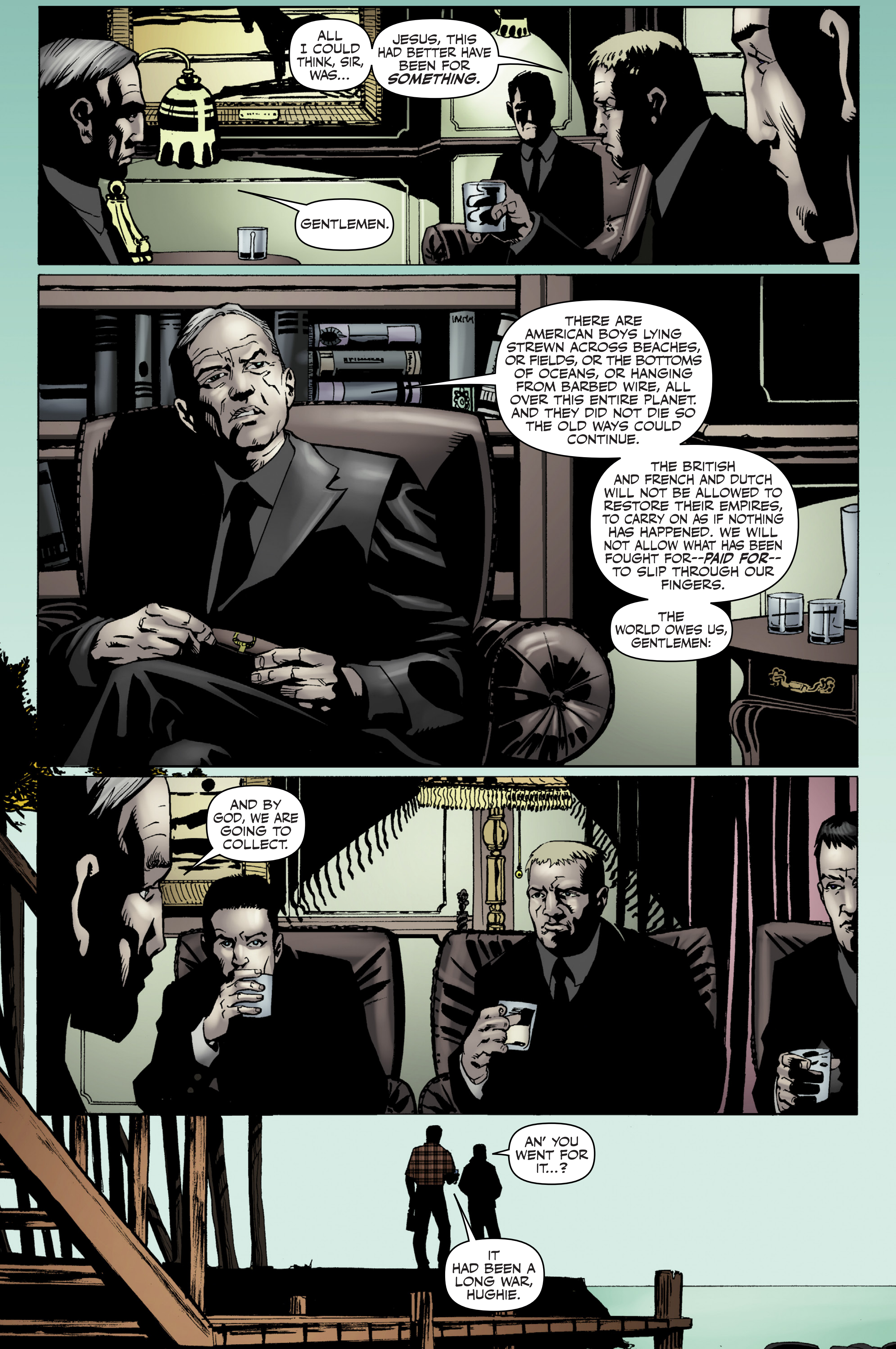

HE SAYS THAT'LL DO JUST FINE, AND THAT'S HOW I TAKE MY FIRST STEP TOWARDS JOINING THE C.I.A.

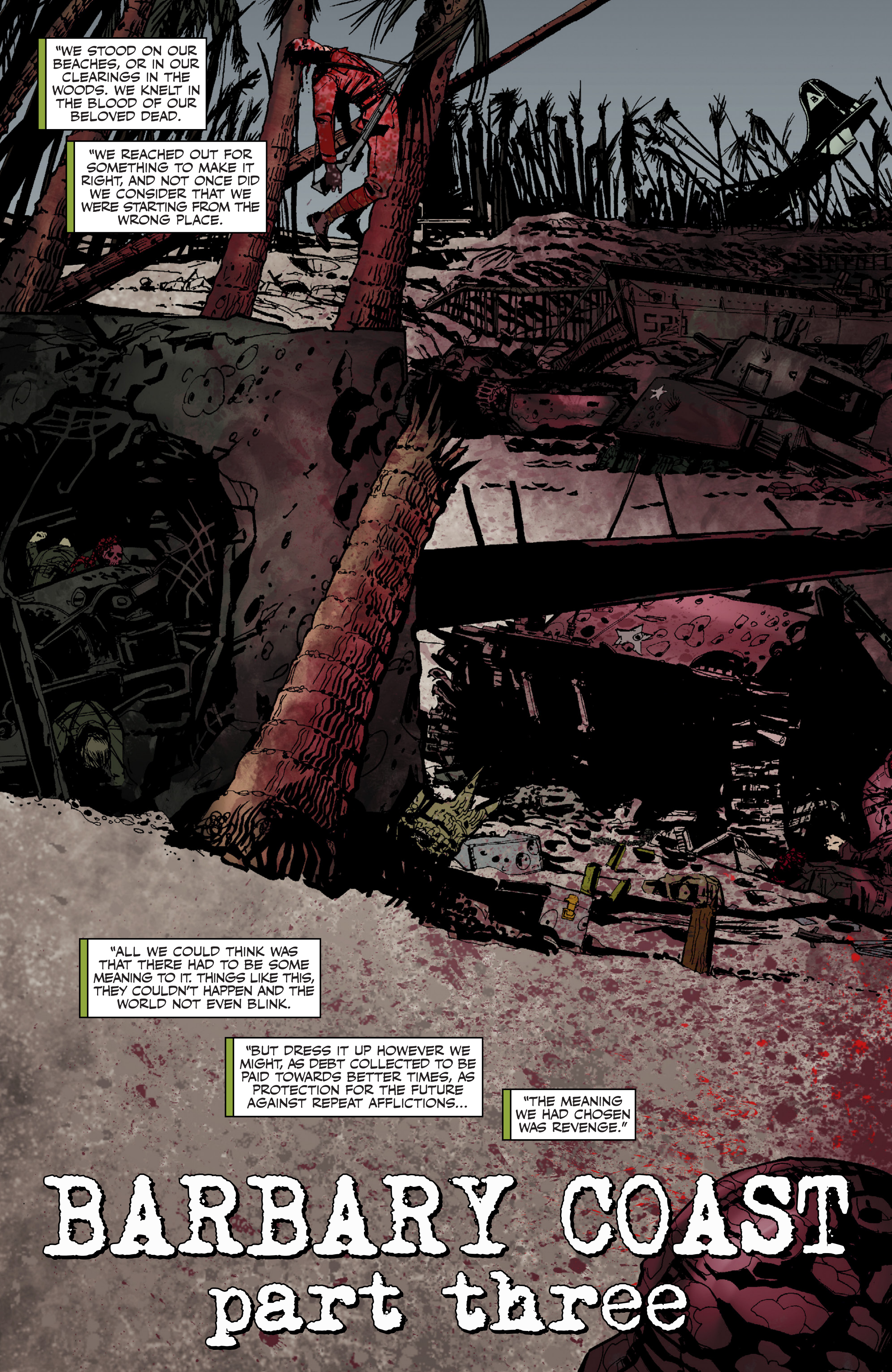

JINGS...
HERE, DO YOU OWN ALL THIS?
FAMILY'S RICH.

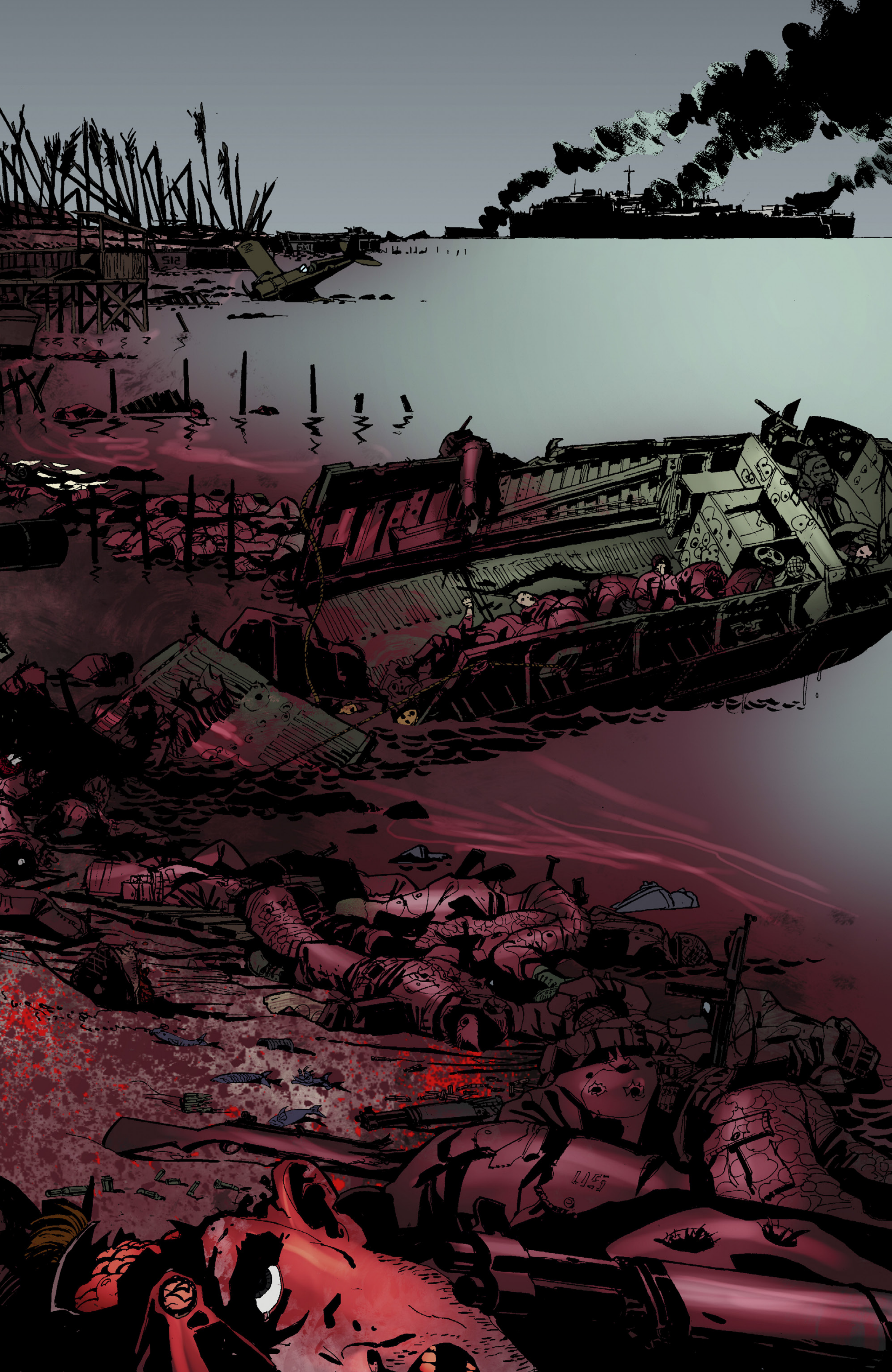

IN D.C. I MEET THESE FRIENDS OF RICK'S: ALL YOUNG OFFICERS OR EX-OFFICERS, ALL IVY LEAGUE BOYS FROM GOOD FAMILIES, AND ALL--ONE WAY OR ANOTHER--WITH THE SAME AXE TO GRIND.
AND ONE EXCEPTION: WILD BILL DONOVAN. EVER HEARD OF HIM?
UH...

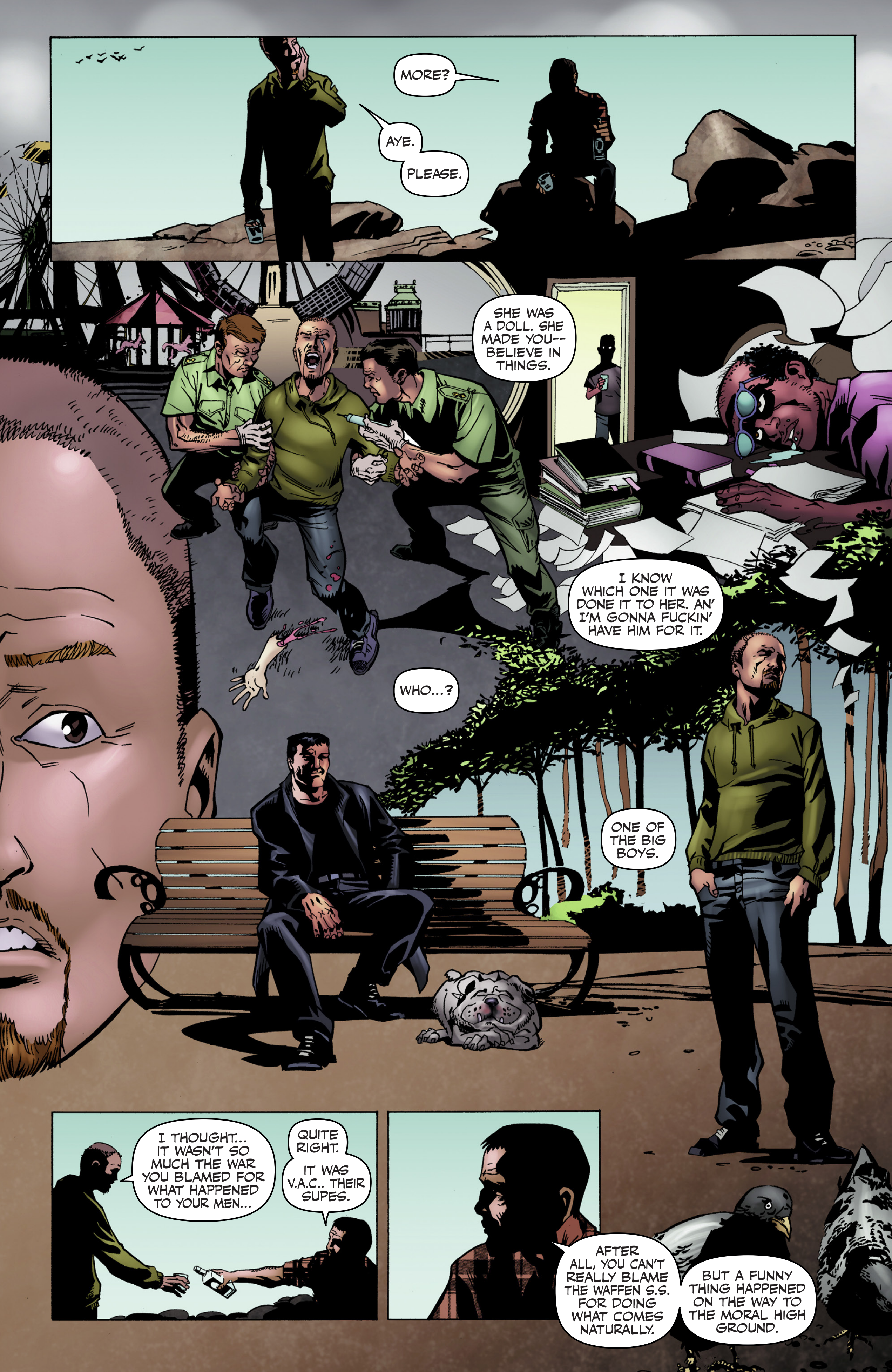

"RAN THE OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES DURING THE WAR, PRETTY MUCH WHAT WOULD BECOME THE AGENCY IN PEACETIME. LARGER THAN LIFE CHARACTER; A COUPLE OF HUNDRED YEARS AGO HE WOULD HAVE BEEN A PIRATE.
"***WHEN IN EVIL COMPANY, TRY TO BLEND IN***--THAT WAS ONE OF HIS.
"NOW, I KNEW RICK WAS A MARINE, BUT UNTIL THEN I HADN'T KNOWN HE'D BEEN AT TARAWA. IT WAS AN ATOLL IN THE PACIFIC, WHERE THE HIGGINS BOATS GOT HUNG UP ON A REEF AND OUR GUYS HAD TO WADE THE REST OF THE WAY, STRAIGHT INTO THE JAP FIRE.

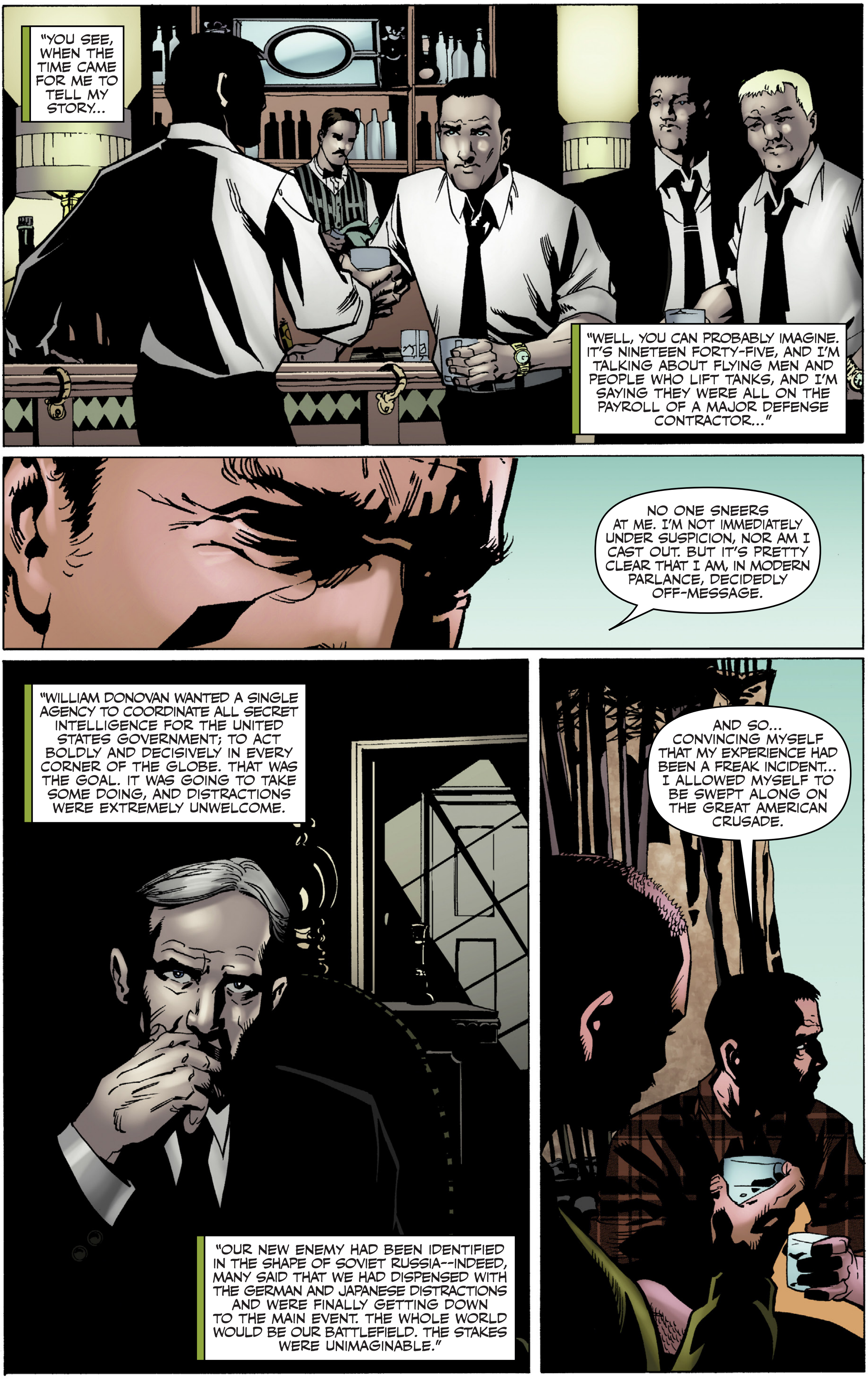

"RICK TALKED ABOUT AFTERWARDS, THE SAND BLACK-RED AND THE SURF JUST BLOODY FROTH, AND BODIES--SO MANY BODIES AND PARTS OF THEM, WALLOWING TOGETHER LIKE A GIANT RAFT, SHIFTING AND SHOVING UP LIMB AFTER LIMB...
"THIS ***MASS*** HAD BEEN HIS MEN, HE SAID, AND GRADUALLY I BEGAN TO SEE WHY WE WERE THERE."

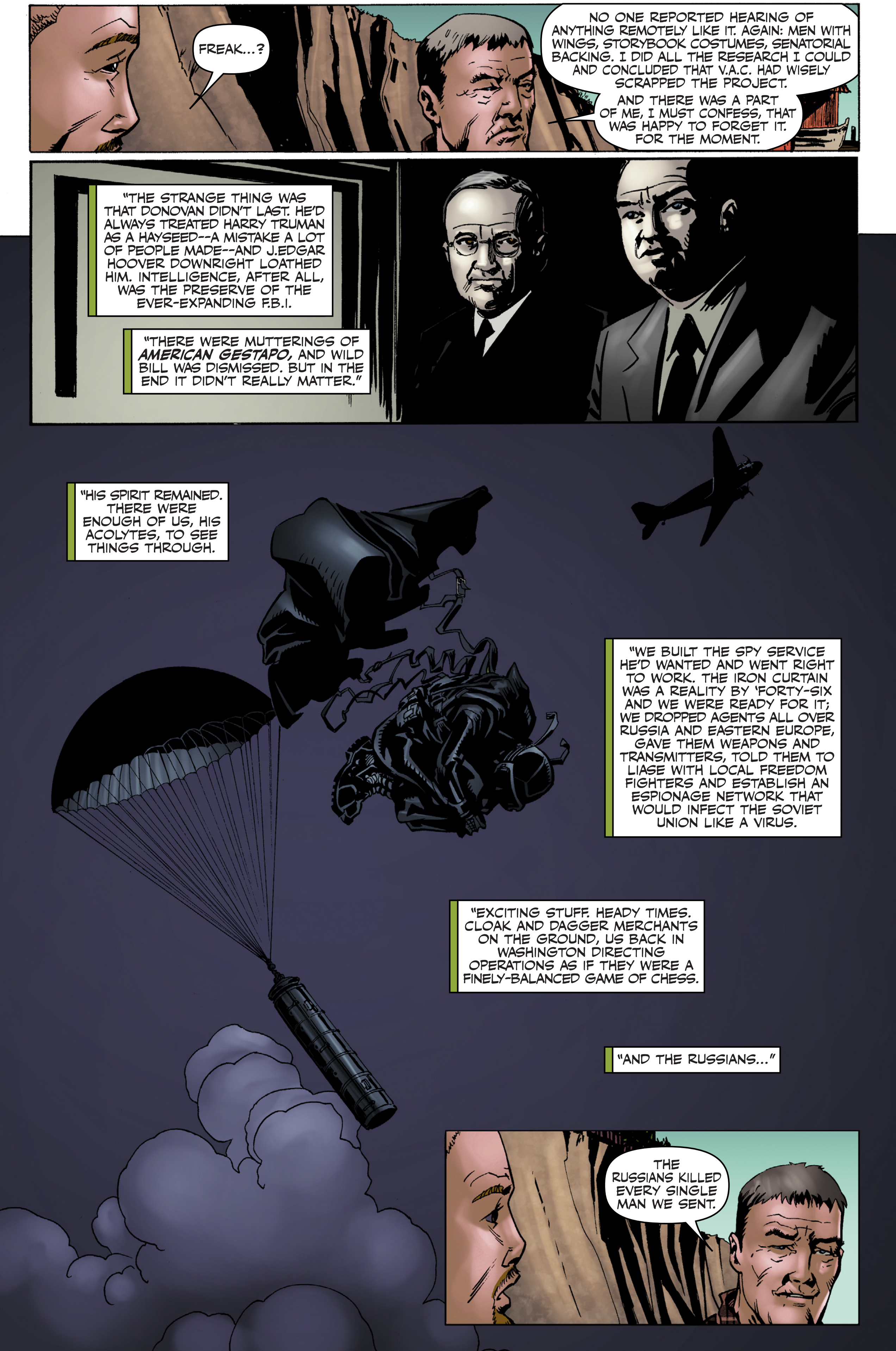

ALL I COULD THINK, SIR, WAS...
JESUS, THIS HAD BETTER HAVE BEEN FOR *SOMETHING.*
GENTLEMEN.
THERE ARE AMERICAN BOYS LYING STREWN ACROSS BEACHES, OR FIELDS, OR THE BOTTOMS OF OCEANS, OR HANGING FROM BARBED WIRE, ALL OVER THIS ENTIRE PLANET. AND THEY DID NOT DIE SO THE OLD WAYS COULD CONTINUE.
THE BRITISH AND FRENCH AND DUTCH WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO RESTORE THEIR EMPIRES, TO CARRY ON AS IF NOTHING HAS HAPPENED. WE WILL NOT ALLOW WHAT HAS BEEN FOUGHT FOR--*PAID FOR*--TO SLIP THROUGH OUR FINGERS.
THE WORLD OWES US, GENTLEMEN:
AND BY GOD, WE ARE GOING TO COLLECT.
AN' YOU WENT FOR IT...?
IT HAD BEEN A LONG WAR, HUGHIE.

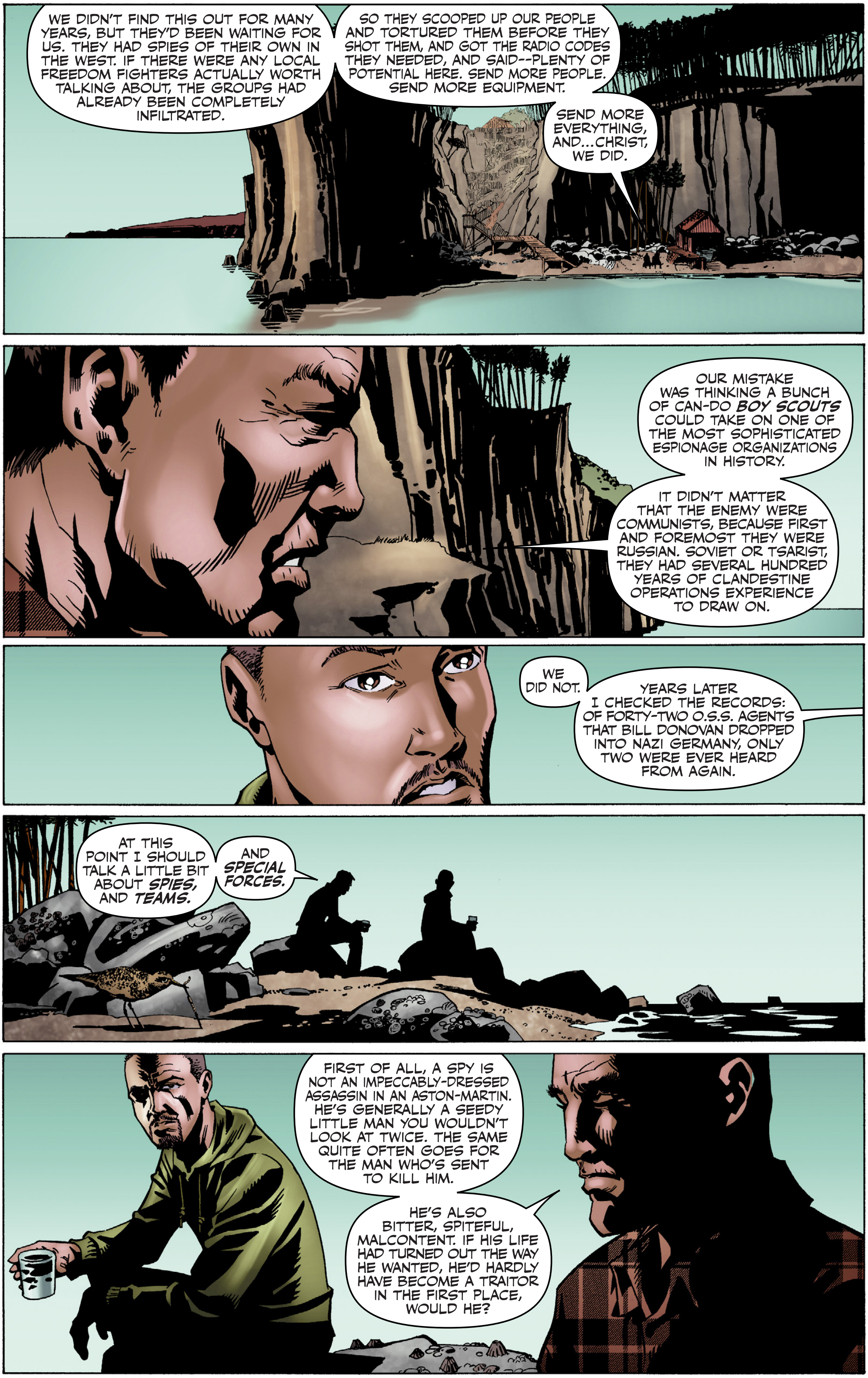

"WE STOOD ON OUR BEACHES, OR IN OUR CLEARINGS IN THE WOODS. WE KNELT IN THE BLOOD OF OUR BELOVED DEAD.
"WE REACHED OUT FOR SOMETHING TO MAKE IT RIGHT, AND NOT ONCE DID WE CONSIDER THAT WE WERE STARTING FROM THE WRONG PLACE.
"ALL WE COULD THINK WAS THAT THERE HAD TO BE SOME MEANING TO IT. THINGS LIKE THIS, THEY COULDN'T HAPPEN AND THE WORLD NOT EVEN BLINK.
"BUT DRESS IT UP HOWEVER WE MIGHT, AS DEBT COLLECTED TO BE PAID TOWARDS BETTER TIMES, AS PROTECTION FOR THE FUTURE AGAINST REPEAT AFFLICTIONS...
"THE MEANING WE HAD CHOSEN WAS REVENGE."
BARBARY COAST
part three

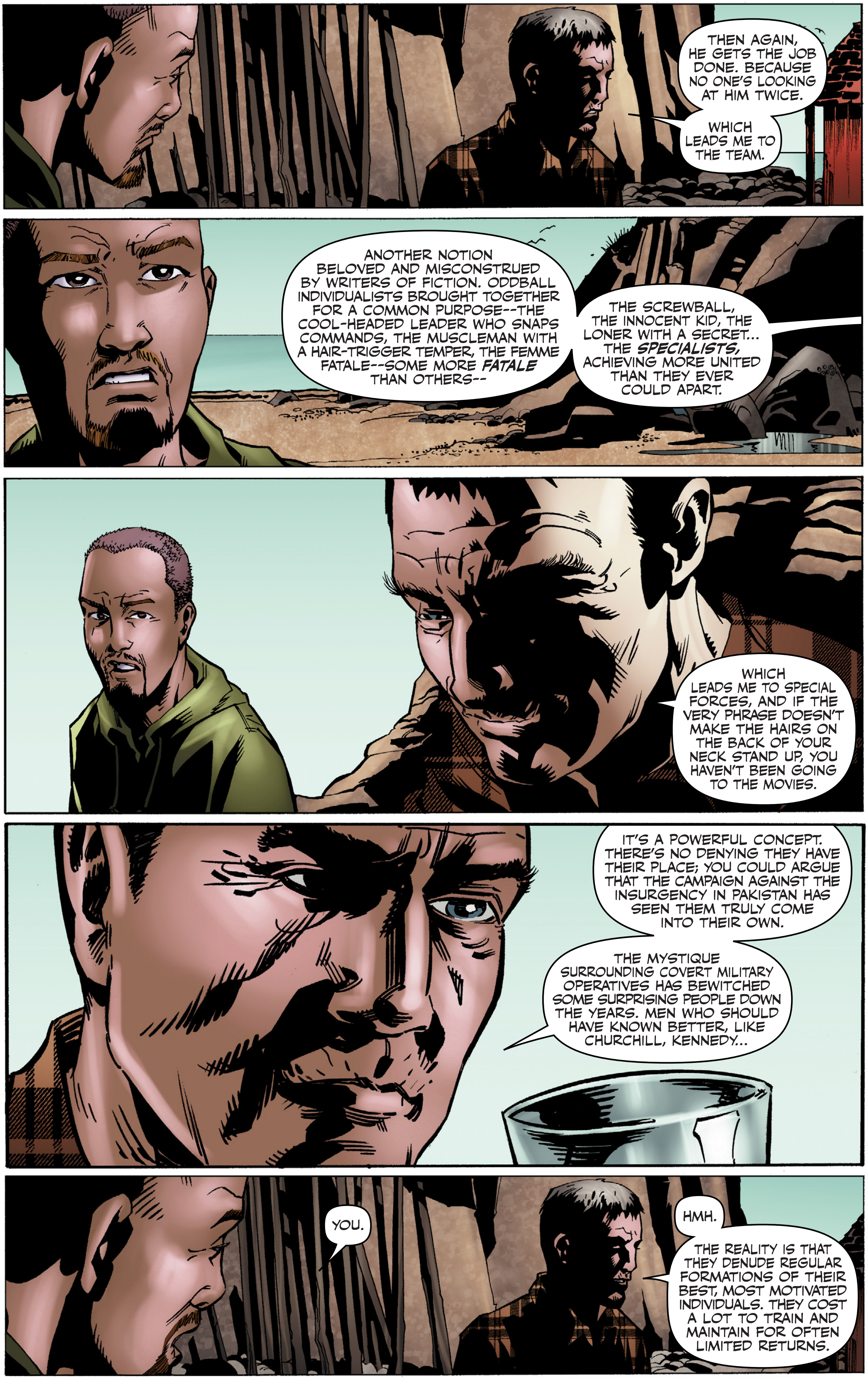


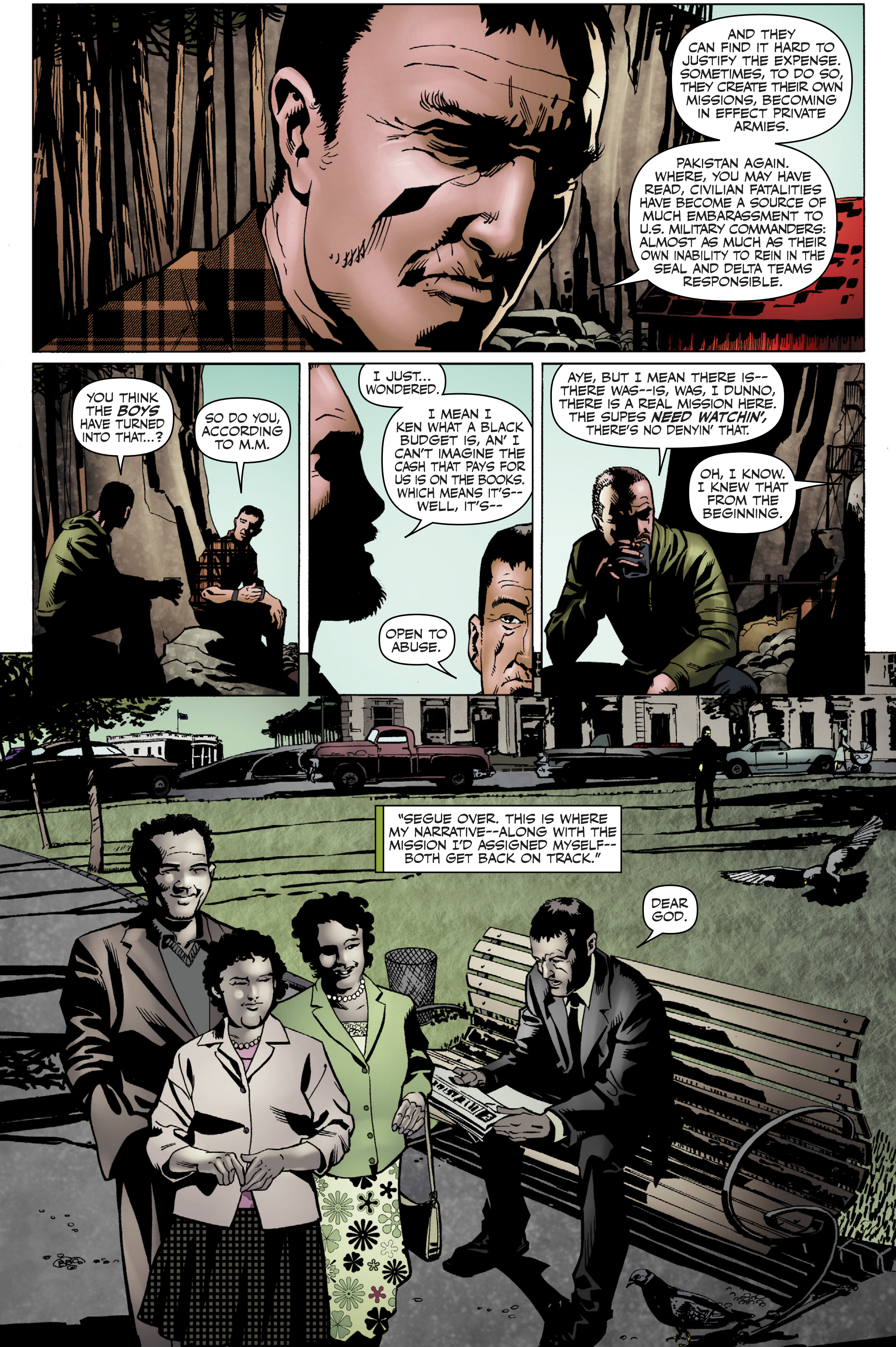

MORE?
AYE.
PLEASE.
SHE WAS A DOLL. SHE MADE YOU-- BELIEVE IN THINGS.
I KNOW WHICH ONE IT WAS DONE IT TO HER. AN' I'M GONNA FUCKIN' HAVE HIM FOR IT.
WHO...?
ONE OF THE BIG BOYS.
I THOUGHT... IT WASN'T SO MUCH THE WAR YOU BLAMED FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR MEN...
QUITE RIGHT.
IT WAS V.A.C.. THEIR SUPES.
AFTER ALL, YOU CAN'T REALLY BLAME THE WAFFEN S.S. FOR DOING WHAT COMES NATURALLY.
BUT A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE MORAL HIGH GROUND.

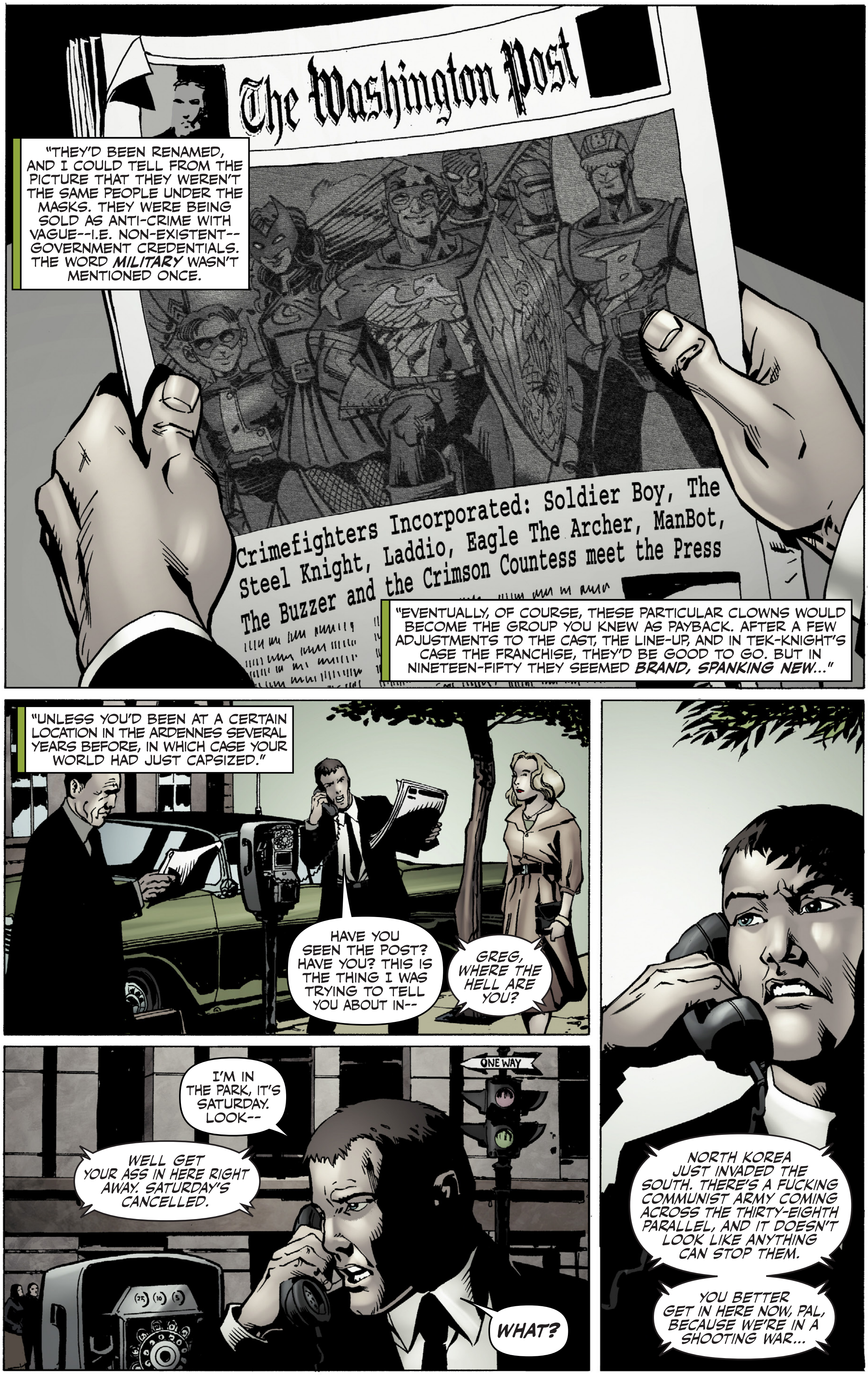

"YOU SEE, WHEN THE TIME CAME FOR ME TO TELL MY STORY...
"WELL, YOU CAN PROBABLY IMAGINE. IT'S NINETEEN FORTY-FIVE, AND I'M TALKING ABOUT FLYING MEN AND PEOPLE WHO LIFT TANKS, AND I'M SAYING THEY WERE ALL ON THE PAYROLL OF A MAJOR DEFENSE CONTRACTOR..."
NO ONE SNEERS AT ME. I'M NOT IMMEDIATELY UNDER SUSPICION, NOR AM I CAST OUT. BUT IT'S PRETTY CLEAR THAT I AM, IN MODERN PARLANCE, DECIDEDLY OFF-MESSAGE.
"WILLIAM DONOVAN WANTED A SINGLE AGENCY TO COORDINATE ALL SECRET INTELLIGENCE FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT; TO ACT BOLDLY AND DECISIVELY IN EVERY CORNER OF THE GLOBE. THAT WAS THE GOAL. IT WAS GOING TO TAKE SOME DOING, AND DISTRACTIONS WERE EXTREMELY UNWELCOME.
"OUR NEW ENEMY HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED IN THE SHAPE OF SOVIET RUSSIA--INDEED, MANY SAID THAT WE HAD DISPENSED WITH THE GERMAN AND JAPANESE DISTRACTIONS AND WERE FINALLY GETTING DOWN TO THE MAIN EVENT. THE WHOLE WORLD WOULD BE OUR BATTLEFIELD. THE STAKES WERE UNIMAGINABLE."
AND SO... CONVINCING MYSELF THAT MY EXPERIENCE HAD BEEN A FREAK INCIDENT... I ALLOWED MYSELF TO BE SWEPT ALONG ON THE GREAT AMERICAN CRUSADE.

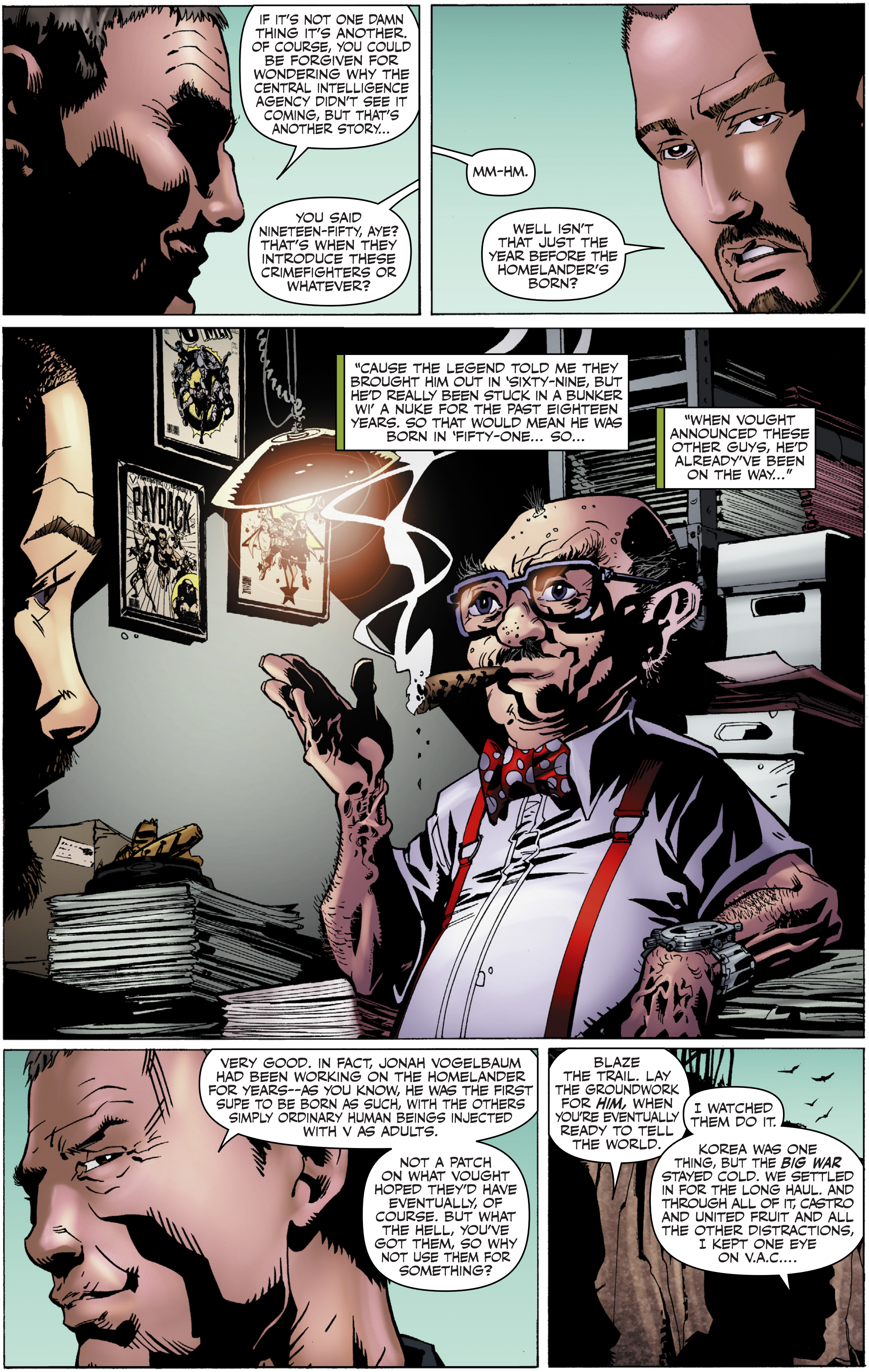

FREAK...?
NO ONE REPORTED HEARING OF ANYTHING REMOTELY LIKE IT. AGAIN: MEN WITH WINGS, STORYBOOK COSTUMES, SENATORIAL BACKING. I DID ALL THE RESEARCH I COULD AND CONCLUDED THAT V.A.C. HAD WISELY SCRAPPED THE PROJECT.
AND THERE WAS A PART OF ME, I MUST CONFESS, THAT WAS HAPPY TO FORGET IT. FOR THE MOMENT.
"THE STRANGE THING WAS THAT DONOVAN DIDN'T LAST. HE'D ALWAYS TREATED HARRY TRUMAN AS A HAYSEED--A MISTAKE A LOT OF PEOPLE MADE--AND J.EDGAR HOOVER DOWNRIGHT LOATHED HIM. INTELLIGENCE, AFTER ALL, WAS THE PRESERVE OF THE EVER-EXPANDING F.B.I.
"THERE WERE MUTTERINGS OF *AMERICAN GESTAPO,* AND WILD BILL WAS DISMISSED. BUT IN THE END IT DIDN'T REALLY MATTER."
"HIS SPIRIT REMAINED. THERE WERE ENOUGH OF US, HIS ACOLYTES, TO SEE THINGS THROUGH.
"WE BUILT THE SPY SERVICE HE'D WANTED AND WENT RIGHT TO WORK. THE IRON CURTAIN WAS A REALITY BY 'FORTY-SIX AND WE WERE READY FOR IT; WE DROPPED AGENTS ALL OVER RUSSIA AND EASTERN EUROPE, GAVE THEM WEAPONS AND TRANSMITTERS, TOLD THEM TO LIASE WITH LOCAL FREEDOM FIGHTERS AND ESTABLISH AN ESPIONAGE NETWORK THAT WOULD INFECT THE SOVIET UNION LIKE A VIRUS.
"EXCITING STUFF. HEADY TIMES. CLOAK AND DAGGER MERCHANTS ON THE GROUND, US BACK IN WASHINGTON DIRECTING OPERATIONS AS IF THEY WERE A FINELY-BALANCED GAME OF CHESS.
"AND THE RUSSIANS..."
THE RUSSIANS KILLED EVERY SINGLE MAN WE SENT.

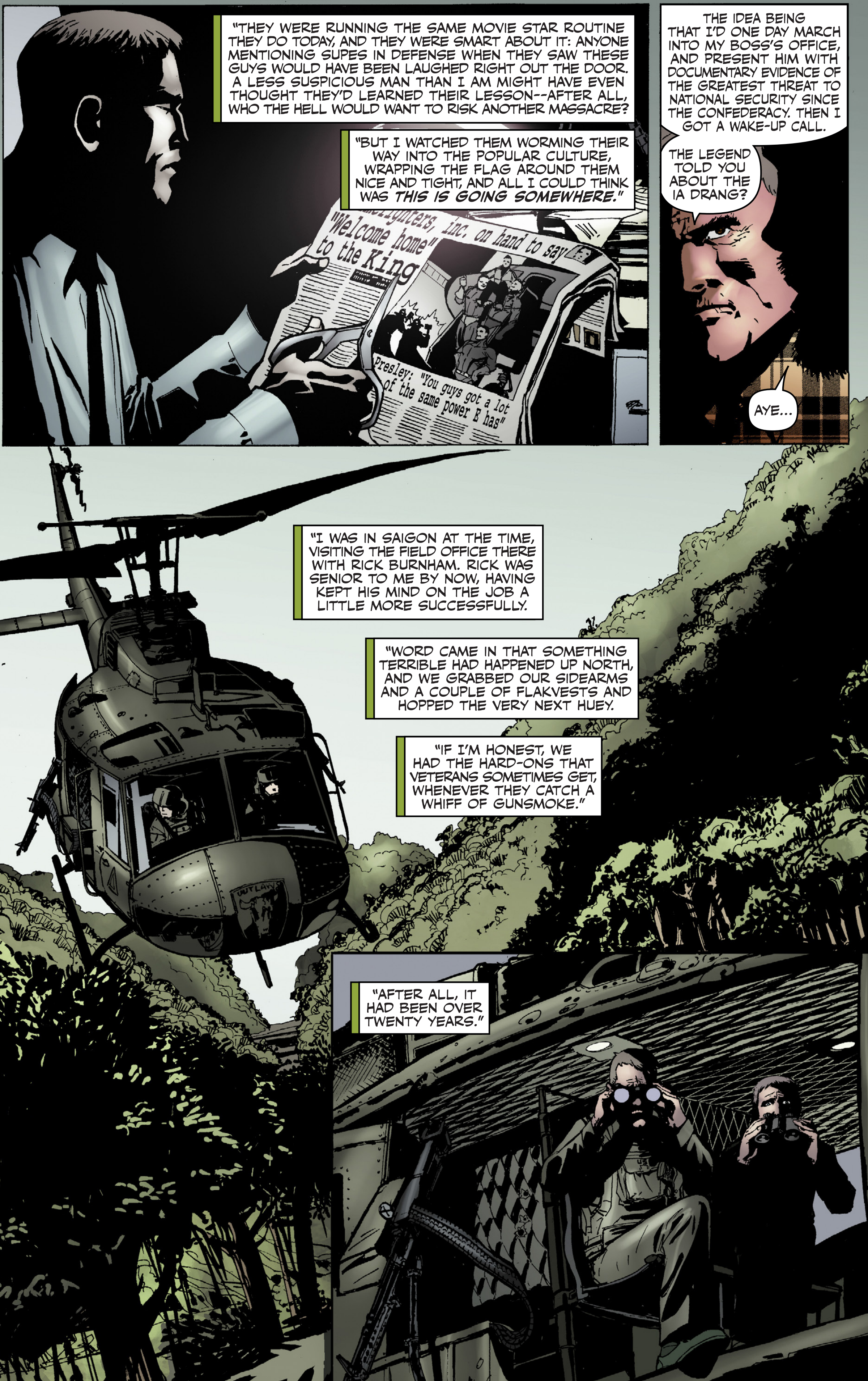

WE DIDN'T FIND THIS OUT FOR MANY YEARS, BUT THEY'D BEEN WAITING FOR US. THEY HAD SPIES OF THEIR OWN IN THE WEST. IF THERE WERE ANY LOCAL FREEDOM FIGHTERS ACTUALLY WORTH TALKING ABOUT, THE GROUPS HAD ALREADY BEEN COMPLETELY INFILTRATED.
SO THEY SCOOPED UP OUR PEOPLE AND TORTURED THEM BEFORE THEY SHOT THEM, AND GOT THE RADIO CODES THEY NEEDED, AND SAID--PLENTY OF POTENTIAL HERE. SEND MORE PEOPLE. SEND MORE EQUIPMENT.
SEND MORE EVERYTHING, AND...CHRIST, WE DID.
OUR MISTAKE WAS THINKING A BUNCH OF CAN-DO ***BOY SCOUTS*** COULD TAKE ON ONE OF THE MOST SOPHISTICATED ESPIONAGE ORGANIZATIONS IN HISTORY.
IT DIDN'T MATTER THAT THE ENEMY WERE COMMUNISTS, BECAUSE FIRST AND FOREMOST THEY WERE RUSSIAN. SOVIET OR TSARIST, THEY HAD SEVERAL HUNDRED YEARS OF CLANDESTINE OPERATIONS EXPERIENCE TO DRAW ON.
WE DID NOT.
YEARS LATER I CHECKED THE RECORDS: OF FORTY-TWO O.S.S. AGENTS THAT BILL DONOVAN DROPPED INTO NAZI GERMANY, ONLY TWO WERE EVER HEARD FROM AGAIN.
AT THIS POINT I SHOULD TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT ***SPIES,*** AND ***TEAMS.***
AND ***SPECIAL FORCES.***
FIRST OF ALL, A SPY IS NOT AN IMPECCABLY-DRESSED ASSASSIN IN AN ASTON-MARTIN. HE'S GENERALLY A SEEDY LITTLE MAN YOU WOULDN'T LOOK AT TWICE. THE SAME QUITE OFTEN GOES FOR THE MAN WHO'S SENT TO KILL HIM.
HE'S ALSO BITTER, SPITEFUL, MALCONTENT. IF HIS LIFE HAD TURNED OUT THE WAY HE WANTED, HE'D HARDLY HAVE BECOME A TRAITOR IN THE FIRST PLACE, WOULD HE?

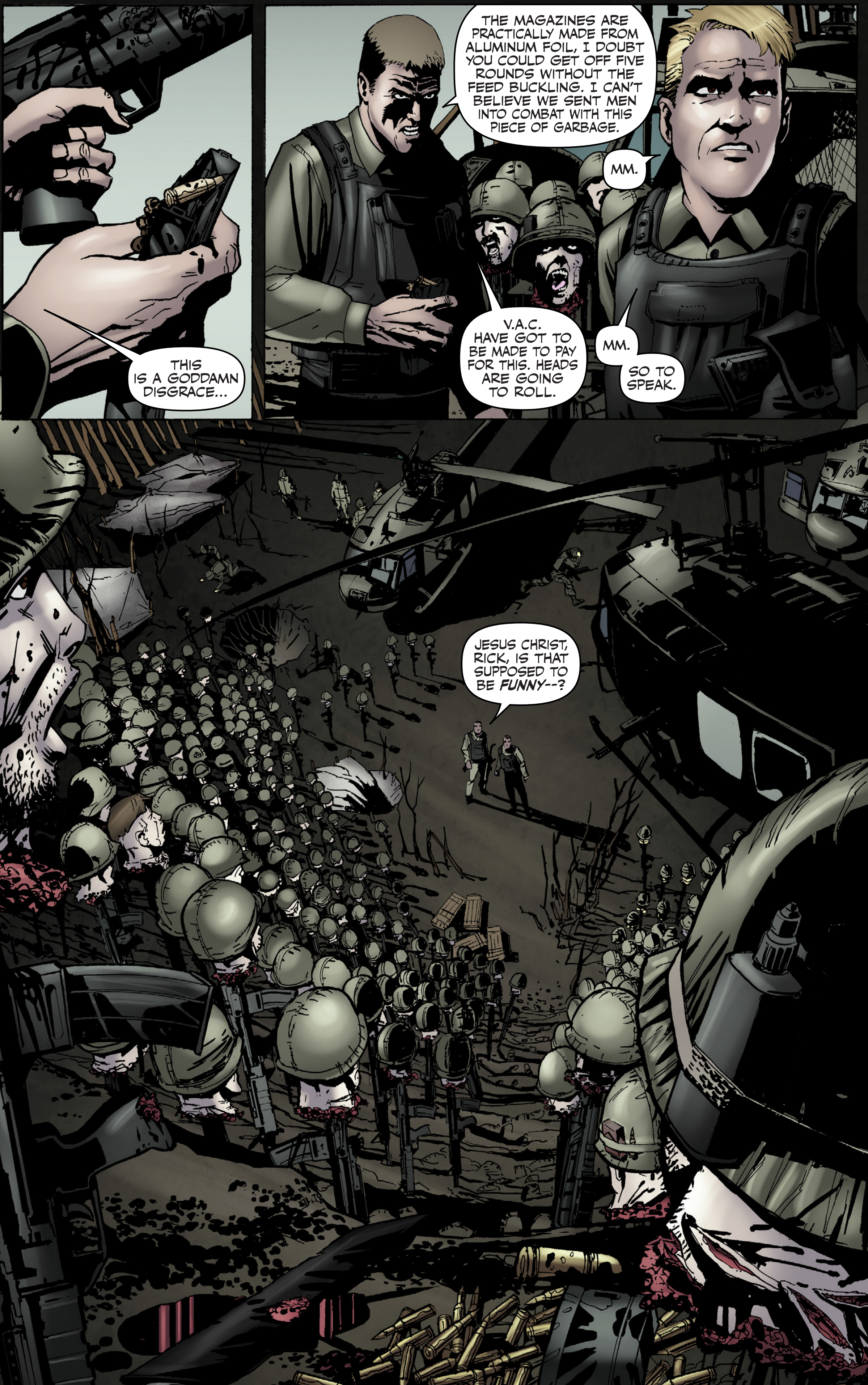

THEN AGAIN, HE GETS THE JOB DONE. BECAUSE NO ONE'S LOOKING AT HIM TWICE.
WHICH LEADS ME TO THE TEAM.
ANOTHER NOTION BELOVED AND MISCONSTRUED BY WRITERS OF FICTION. ODDBALL INDIVIDUALISTS BROUGHT TOGETHER FOR A COMMON PURPOSE--THE COOL-HEADED LEADER WHO SNAPS COMMANDS, THE MUSCLEMAN WITH A HAIR-TRIGGER TEMPER, THE FEMME FATALE--SOME MORE *FATALE* THAN OTHERS--
THE SCREWBALL, THE INNOCENT KID, THE LONER WITH A SECRET... THE *SPECIALISTS,* ACHIEVING MORE UNITED THAN THEY EVER COULD APART.
WHICH LEADS ME TO SPECIAL FORCES, AND IF THE VERY PHRASE DOESN'T MAKE THE HAIRS ON THE BACK OF YOUR NECK STAND UP, YOU HAVEN'T BEEN GOING TO THE MOVIES.
IT'S A POWERFUL CONCEPT. THERE'S NO DENYING THEY HAVE THEIR PLACE; YOU COULD ARGUE THAT THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE INSURGENCY IN PAKISTAN HAS SEEN THEM TRULY COME INTO THEIR OWN.
THE MYSTIQUE SURROUNDING COVERT MILITARY OPERATIVES HAS BEWITCHED SOME SURPRISING PEOPLE DOWN THE YEARS. MEN WHO SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER, LIKE CHURCHILL, KENNEDY...
YOU.
HMH.
THE REALITY IS THAT THEY DENUDE REGULAR FORMATIONS OF THEIR BEST, MOST MOTIVATED INDIVIDUALS. THEY COST A LOT TO TRAIN AND MAINTAIN FOR OFTEN LIMITED RETURNS.

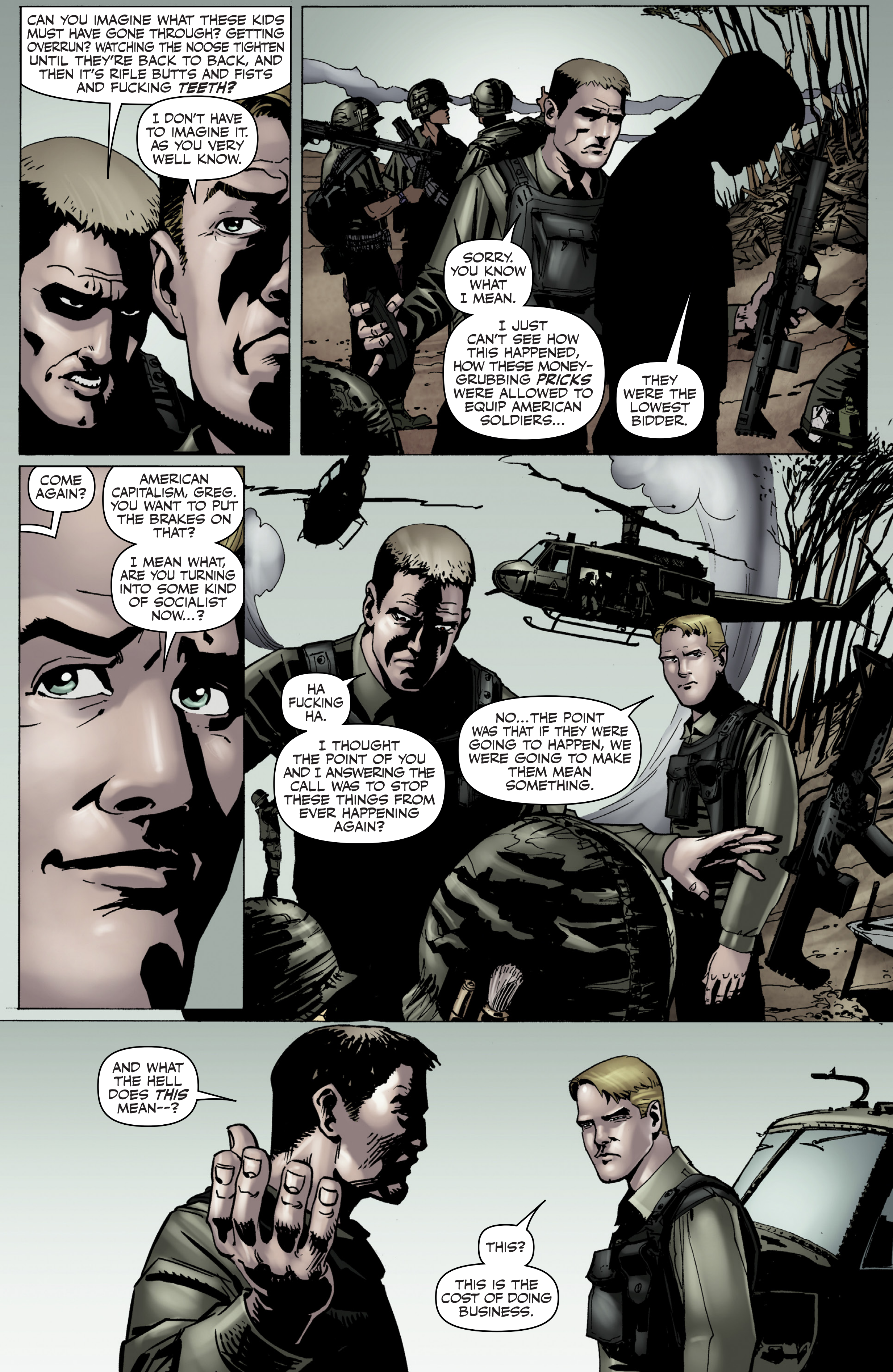

AND THEY CAN FIND IT HARD TO JUSTIFY THE EXPENSE. SOMETIMES, TO DO SO, THEY CREATE THEIR OWN MISSIONS, BECOMING IN EFFECT PRIVATE ARMIES.
PAKISTAN AGAIN. WHERE, YOU MAY HAVE READ, CIVILIAN FATALITIES HAVE BECOME A SOURCE OF MUCH EMBARASSMENT TO U.S. MILITARY COMMANDERS: ALMOST AS MUCH AS THEIR OWN INABILITY TO REIN IN THE SEAL AND DELTA TEAMS RESPONSIBLE.
YOU THINK THE *BOYS* HAVE TURNED INTO THAT...?
SO DO YOU, ACCORDING TO M.M.
I JUST... WONDERED.
I MEAN I KEN WHAT A BLACK BUDGET IS, AN' I CAN'T IMAGINE THE CASH THAT PAYS FOR US IS ON THE BOOKS. WHICH MEANS IT'S-- WELL, IT'S--
OPEN TO ABUSE.
AYE, BUT I MEAN THERE IS-- THERE WAS--IS, WAS, I DUNNO, THERE IS A REAL MISSION HERE. THE SUPES ***NEED WATCHIN',*** THERE'S NO DENYIN' THAT.
OH, I KNOW. I KNEW THAT FROM THE BEGINNING.
"SEGUE OVER. THIS IS WHERE MY NARRATIVE--ALONG WITH THE MISSION I'D ASSIGNED MYSELF--BOTH GET BACK ON TRACK."
DEAR GOD.

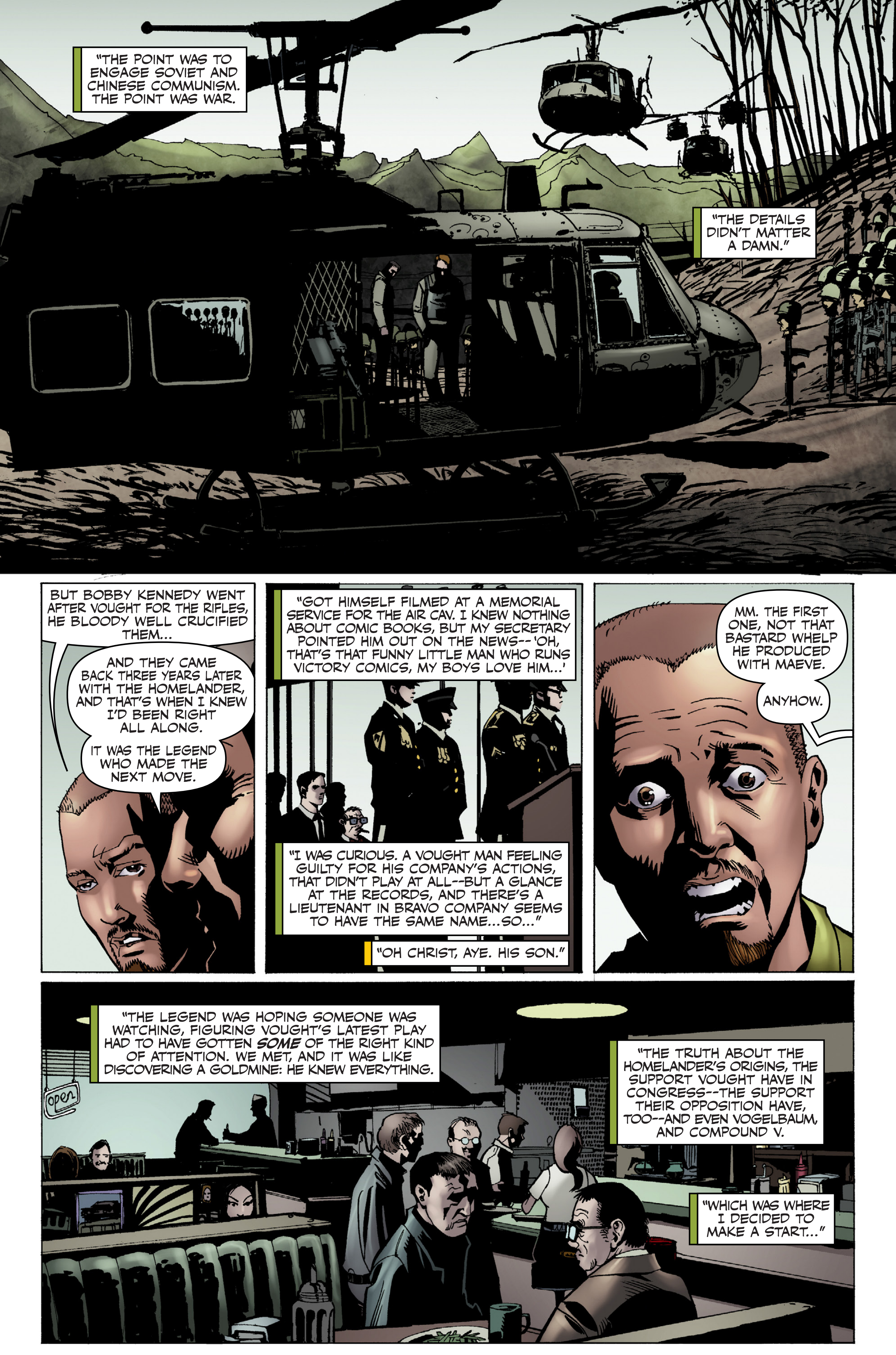

The Washington Post
"THEY'D BEEN RENAMED, AND I COULD TELL FROM THE PICTURE THAT THEY WEREN'T THE SAME PEOPLE UNDER THE MASKS. THEY WERE BEING SOLD AS ANTI-CRIME WITH VAGUE--I.E. NON-EXISTENT--GOVERNMENT CREDENTIALS. THE WORD *MILITARY* WASN'T MENTIONED ONCE.
Crimefighters Incorporated: Soldier Boy, The Steel Knight, Laddio, Eagle The Archer, ManBot, The Buzzer and the Crimson Countess meet the Press
"EVENTUALLY, OF COURSE, THESE PARTICULAR CLOWNS WOULD BECOME THE GROUP YOU KNEW AS PAYBACK. AFTER A FEW ADJUSTMENTS TO THE CAST, THE LINE-UP, AND IN TEK-KNIGHT'S CASE THE FRANCHISE, THEY'D BE GOOD TO GO. BUT IN NINETEEN-FIFTY THEY SEEMED ***BRAND, SPANKING NEW***..."
"UNLESS YOU'D BEEN AT A CERTAIN LOCATION IN THE ARDENNES SEVERAL YEARS BEFORE, IN WHICH CASE YOUR WORLD HAD JUST CAPSIZED."
HAVE YOU SEEN THE POST? HAVE YOU? THIS IS THE THING I WAS TRYING TO TELL YOU ABOUT IN--
GREG, WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU?
NORTH KOREA JUST INVADED THE SOUTH. THERE'S A FUCKING COMMUNIST ARMY COMING ACROSS THE THIRTY-EIGHTH PARALLEL, AND IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE ANYTHING CAN STOP THEM.
YOU BETTER GET IN HERE NOW, PAL, BECAUSE WE'RE IN A SHOOTING WAR...
ONE WAY
I'M IN THE PARK, IT'S SATURDAY. LOOK--
WELL GET YOUR ASS IN HERE RIGHT AWAY. SATURDAY'S CANCELLED.
25 10 5
WHAT?

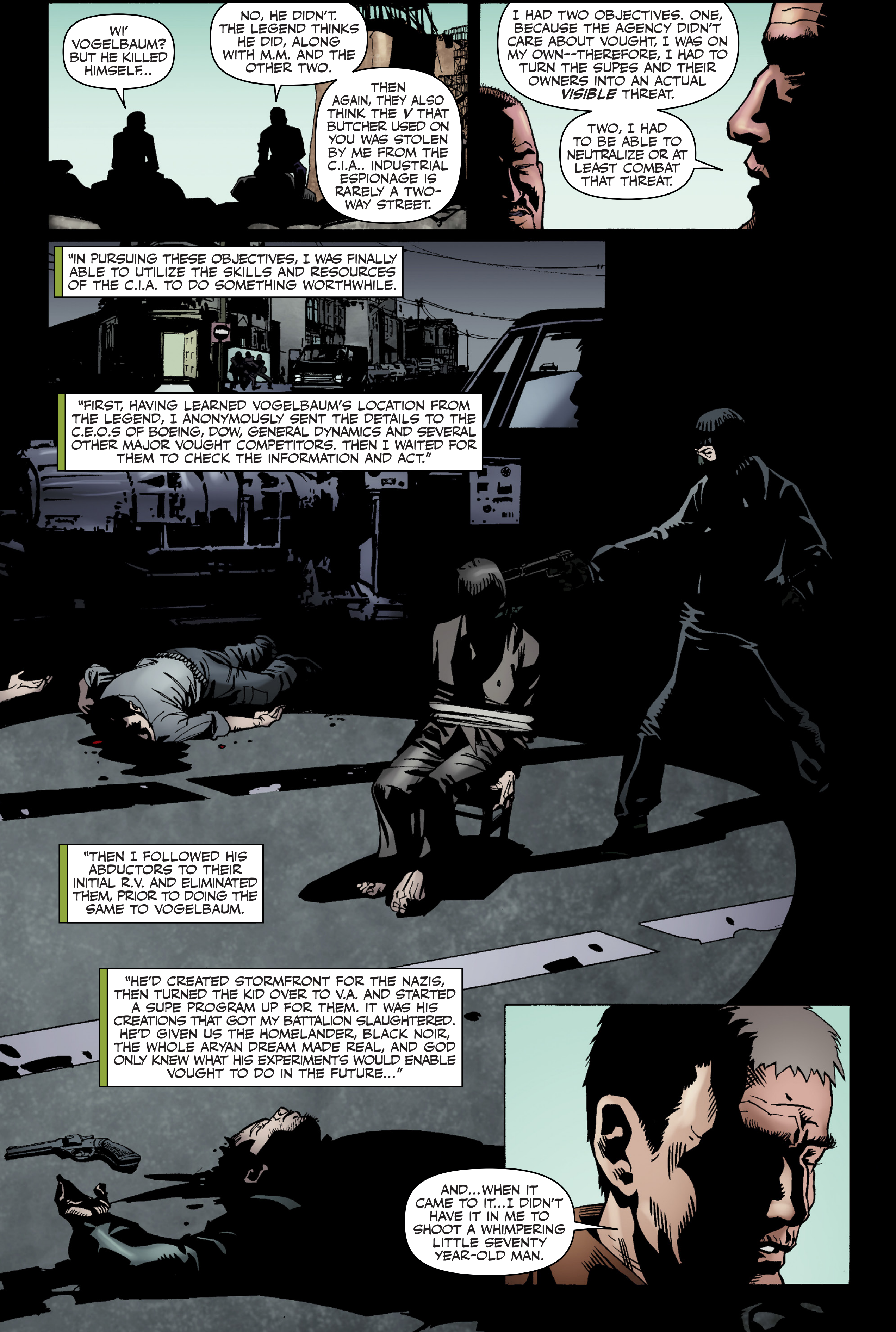

IF IT'S NOT ONE DAMN THING IT'S ANOTHER. OF COURSE, YOU COULD BE FORGIVEN FOR WONDERING WHY THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY DIDN'T SEE IT COMING, BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY...
YOU SAID NINETEEN-FIFTY, AYE? THAT'S WHEN THEY INTRODUCE THESE CRIMEFIGHTERS OR WHATEVER?
MM-HM.
WELL ISN'T THAT JUST THE YEAR BEFORE THE HOMELANDER'S BORN?
"CAUSE THE LEGEND TOLD ME THEY BROUGHT HIM OUT IN 'SIXTY-NINE, BUT HE'D REALLY BEEN STUCK IN A BUNKER WI' A NUKE FOR THE PAST EIGHTEEN YEARS. SO THAT WOULD MEAN HE WAS BORN IN 'FIFTY-ONE... SO...
"WHEN VOUGHT ANNOUNCED THESE OTHER GUYS, HE'D ALREADY'VE BEEN ON THE WAY..."
PAYBACK
VERY GOOD. IN FACT, JONAH VOGELBAUM HAD BEEN WORKING ON THE HOMELANDER FOR YEARS--AS YOU KNOW, HE WAS THE FIRST SUPE TO BE BORN AS SUCH, WITH THE OTHERS SIMPLY ORDINARY HUMAN BEINGS INJECTED WITH V AS ADULTS.
NOT A PATCH ON WHAT VOUGHT HOPED THEY'D HAVE EVENTUALLY, OF COURSE. BUT WHAT THE HELL, YOU'VE GOT THEM, SO WHY NOT USE THEM FOR SOMETHING?
BLAZE THE TRAIL. LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR *HIM,* WHEN YOU'RE EVENTUALLY READY TO TELL THE WORLD.
I WATCHED THEM DO IT.
KOREA WAS ONE THING, BUT THE *BIG WAR* STAYED COLD. WE SETTLED IN FOR THE LONG HAUL. AND THROUGH ALL OF IT, CASTRO AND UNITED FRUIT AND ALL THE OTHER DISTRACTIONS, I KEPT ONE EYE ON V.A.C....

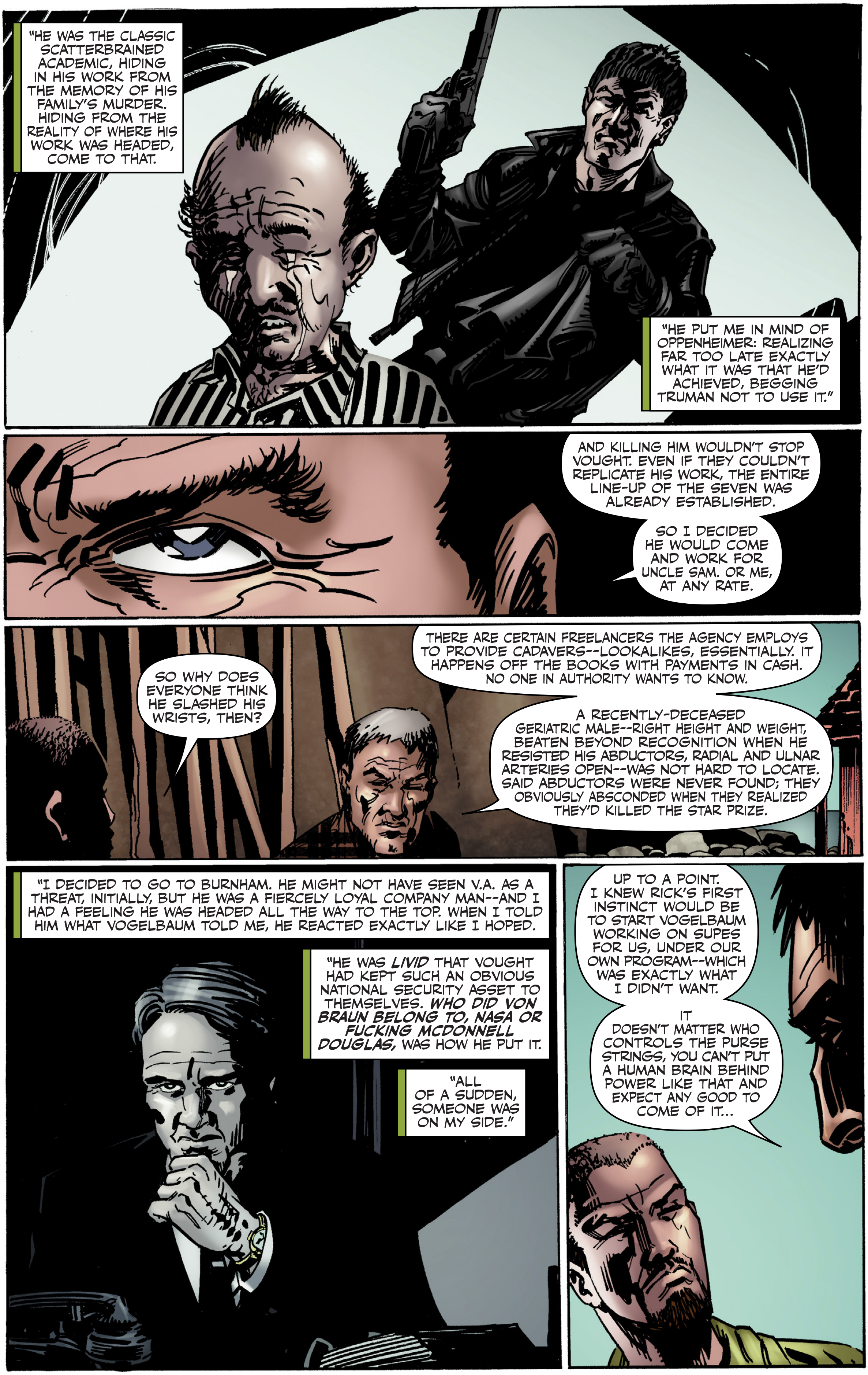

"THEY WERE RUNNING THE SAME MOVIE STAR ROUTINE THEY DO TODAY, AND THEY WERE SMART ABOUT IT: ANYONE MENTIONING SUPES IN DEFENSE WHEN THEY SAW THESE GUYS WOULD HAVE BEEN LAUGHED RIGHT OUT THE DOOR. A LESS SUSPICIOUS MAN THAN I AM MIGHT HAVE EVEN THOUGHT THEY'D LEARNED THEIR LESSON--AFTER ALL, WHO THE HELL WOULD WANT TO RISK ANOTHER MASSACRE?
"BUT I WATCHED THEM WORMING THEIR WAY INTO THE POPULAR CULTURE, WRAPPING THE FLAG AROUND THEM NICE AND TIGHT, AND ALL I COULD THINK WAS *THIS IS GOING SOMEWHERE.*"
fighters, inc. on hand to say "Welcome home" to the King
Presley: "You guys got a lot of the same power E has"
THE IDEA BEING THAT I'D ONE DAY MARCH INTO MY BOSS'S OFFICE, AND PRESENT HIM WITH DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE OF THE GREATEST THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY SINCE THE CONFEDERACY. THEN I GOT A WAKE-UP CALL.
THE LEGEND TOLD YOU ABOUT THE IA DRANG?
AYE...
"I WAS IN SAIGON AT THE TIME, VISITING THE FIELD OFFICE THERE WITH RICK BURNHAM. RICK WAS SENIOR TO ME BY NOW, HAVING KEPT HIS MIND ON THE JOB A LITTLE MORE SUCCESSFULLY.
"WORD CAME IN THAT SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAD HAPPENED UP NORTH, AND WE GRABBED OUR SIDEARMS AND A COUPLE OF FLAKVESTS AND HOPPED THE VERY NEXT HUEY.
"IF I'M HONEST, WE HAD THE HARD-ONS THAT VETERANS SOMETIMES GET, WHENEVER THEY CATCH A WHIFF OF GUNSMOKE."
OUTLAWS
"AFTER ALL, IT HAD BEEN OVER TWENTY YEARS."

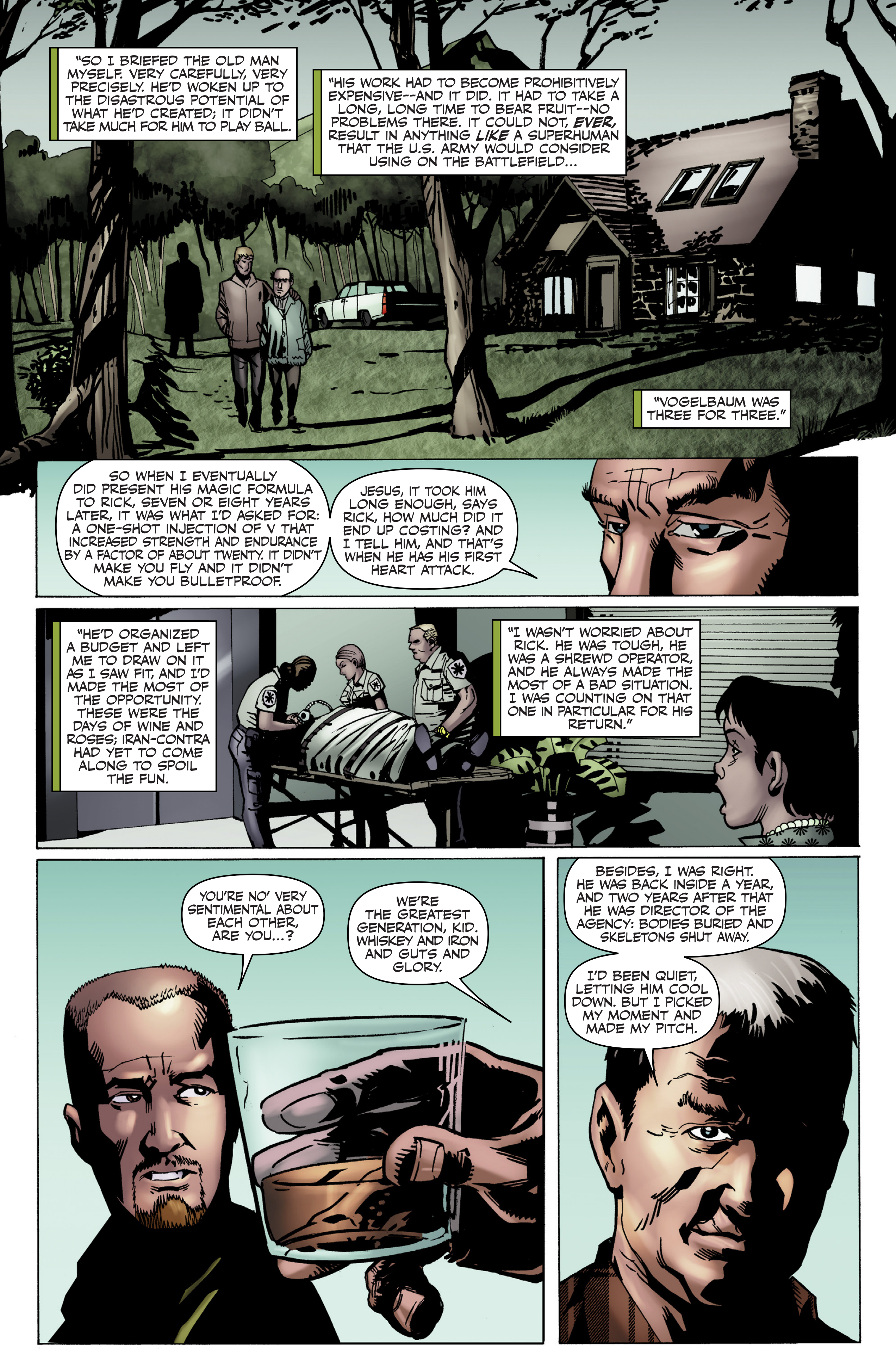

THIS IS A GODDAMN DISGRACE...
THE MAGAZINES ARE PRACTICALLY MADE FROM ALUMINUM FOIL, I DOUBT YOU COULD GET OFF FIVE ROUNDS WITHOUT THE FEED BUCKLING. I CAN'T BELIEVE WE SENT MEN INTO COMBAT WITH THIS PIECE OF GARBAGE.
MM.
V.A.C. HAVE GOT TO BE MADE TO PAY FOR THIS. HEADS ARE GOING TO ROLL.
MM.
SO TO SPEAK.
JESUS CHRIST, RICK, IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE *FUNNY*--?

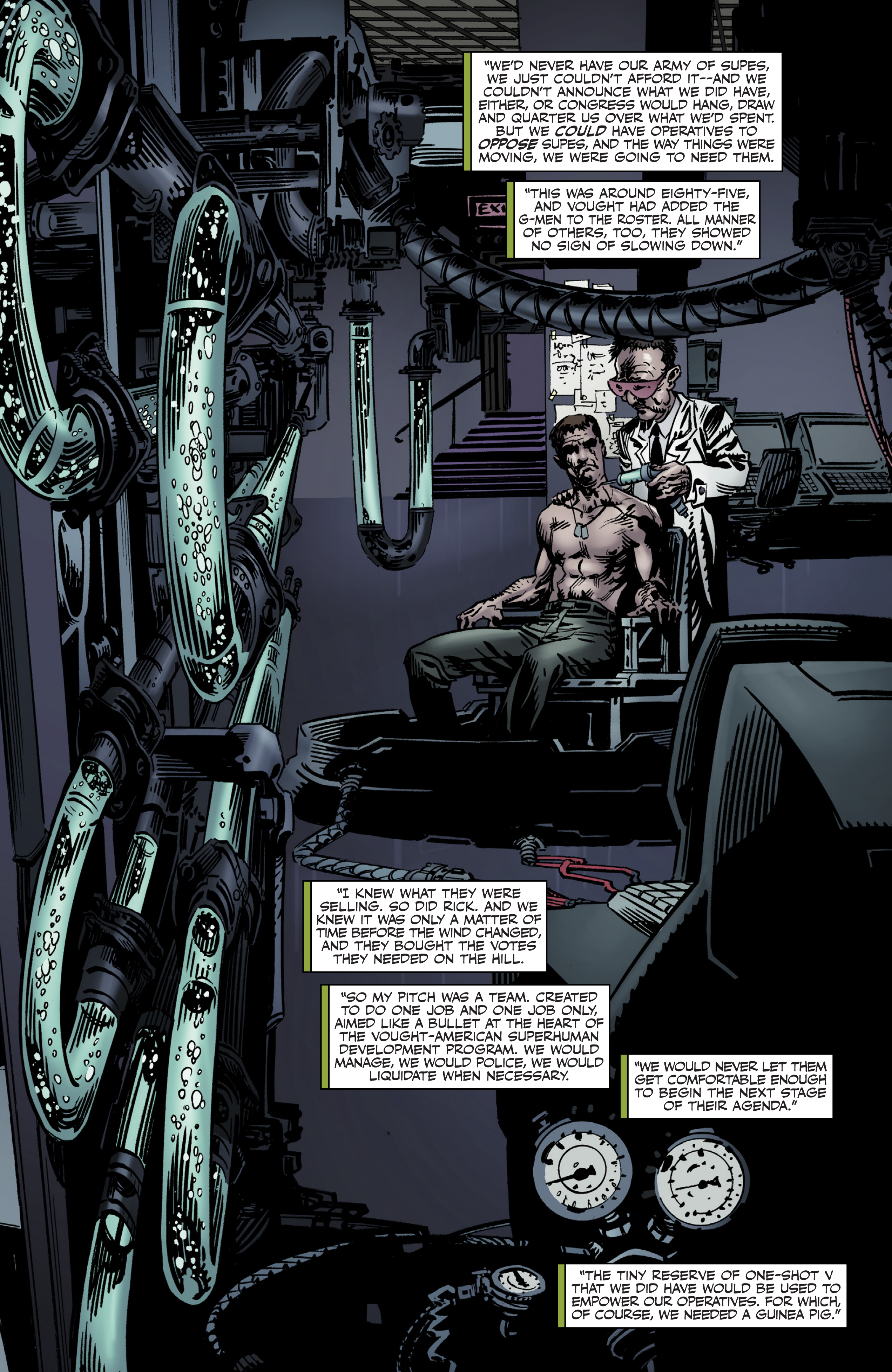

CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT THESE KIDS MUST HAVE GONE THROUGH? GETTING OVERRUN? WATCHING THE NOOSE TIGHTEN UNTIL THEY'RE BACK TO BACK, AND THEN IT'S RIFLE BUTTS AND FISTS AND FUCKING *TEETH?*
I DON'T HAVE TO IMAGINE IT. AS YOU VERY WELL KNOW.
SORRY. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
I JUST CAN'T SEE HOW THIS HAPPENED, HOW THESE MONEY-GRUBBING *PRICKS* WERE ALLOWED TO EQUIP AMERICAN SOLDIERS...
THEY WERE THE LOWEST BIDDER.
COME AGAIN?
AMERICAN CAPITALISM, GREG. YOU WANT TO PUT THE BRAKES ON THAT?
I MEAN WHAT, ARE YOU TURNING INTO SOME KIND OF SOCIALIST NOW...?
HA FUCKING HA.
I THOUGHT THE POINT OF YOU AND I ANSWERING THE CALL WAS TO STOP THESE THINGS FROM EVER HAPPENING AGAIN?
NO...THE POINT WAS THAT IF THEY WERE GOING TO HAPPEN, WE WERE GOING TO MAKE THEM MEAN SOMETHING.
AND WHAT THE HELL DOES *THIS* MEAN--?
THIS?
THIS IS THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS.

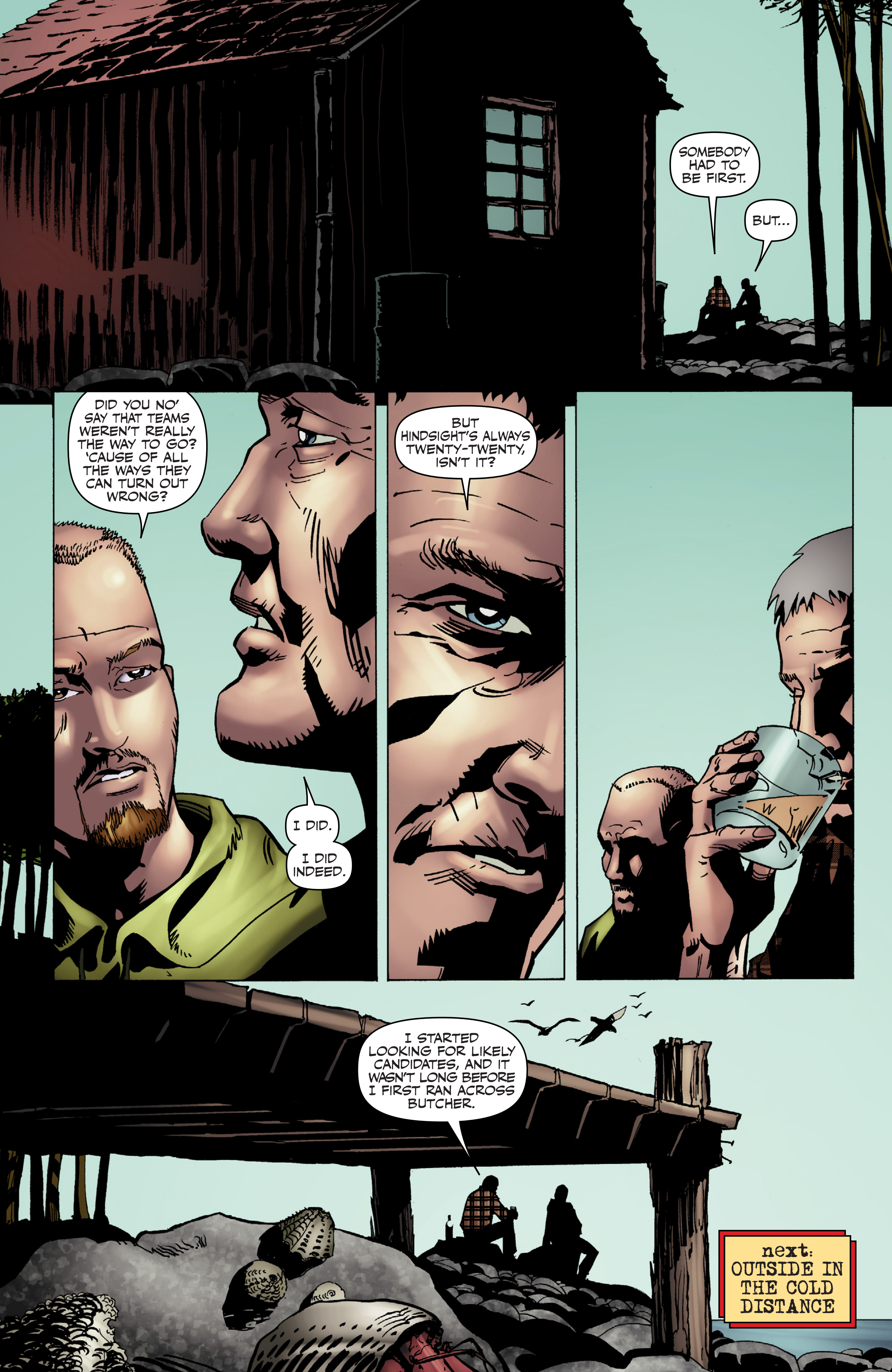

"THE POINT WAS TO ENGAGE SOVIET AND CHINESE COMMUNISM. THE POINT WAS WAR.
"THE DETAILS DIDN'T MATTER A DAMN."
BUT BOBBY KENNEDY WENT AFTER VOUGHT FOR THE RIFLES, HE BLOODY WELL CRUCIFIED THEM...
AND THEY CAME BACK THREE YEARS LATER WITH THE HOMELANDER, AND THAT'S WHEN I KNEW I'D BEEN RIGHT ALL ALONG.
IT WAS THE LEGEND WHO MADE THE NEXT MOVE.
"GOT HIMSELF FILMED AT A MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE AIR CAV. I KNEW NOTHING ABOUT COMIC BOOKS, BUT MY SECRETARY POINTED HIM OUT ON THE NEWS-- 'OH, THAT'S THAT FUNNY LITTLE MAN WHO RUNS VICTORY COMICS, MY BOYS LOVE HIM...'
"I WAS CURIOUS. A VOUGHT MAN FEELING GUILTY FOR HIS COMPANY'S ACTIONS, THAT DIDN'T PLAY AT ALL--BUT A GLANCE AT THE RECORDS, AND THERE'S A LIEUTENANT IN BRAVO COMPANY SEEMS TO HAVE THE SAME NAME...SO..."
"OH CHRIST, AYE. HIS SON."
MM. THE FIRST ONE, NOT THAT BASTARD WHELP HE PRODUCED WITH MAEVE.
ANYHOW.
"THE LEGEND WAS HOPING SOMEONE WAS WATCHING, FIGURING VOUGHT'S LATEST PLAY HAD TO HAVE GOTTEN *SOME* OF THE RIGHT KIND OF ATTENTION. WE MET, AND IT WAS LIKE DISCOVERING A GOLDMINE: HE KNEW EVERYTHING.
OPEN
"THE TRUTH ABOUT THE HOMELANDER'S ORIGINS, THE SUPPORT VOUGHT HAVE IN CONGRESS--THE SUPPORT THEIR OPPOSITION HAVE, TOO--AND EVEN VOGELBAUM, AND COMPOUND V.
"WHICH WAS WHERE I DECIDED TO MAKE A START..."


WI' VOGELBAUM? BUT HE KILLED HIMSELF...
NO, HE DIDN'T. THE LEGEND THINKS HE DID, ALONG WITH M.M. AND THE OTHER TWO.
THEN AGAIN, THEY ALSO THINK THE *V* THAT BUTCHER USED ON YOU WAS STOLEN BY ME FROM THE C.I.A.. INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE IS RARELY A TWO-WAY STREET.
I HAD TWO OBJECTIVES. ONE, BECAUSE THE AGENCY DIDN'T CARE ABOUT VOUGHT, I WAS ON MY OWN--THEREFORE, I HAD TO TURN THE SUPES AND THEIR OWNERS INTO AN ACTUAL ***VISIBLE*** THREAT.
TWO, I HAD TO BE ABLE TO NEUTRALIZE OR AT LEAST COMBAT THAT THREAT.
"IN PURSUING THESE OBJECTIVES, I WAS FINALLY ABLE TO UTILIZE THE SKILLS AND RESOURCES OF THE C.I.A. TO DO SOMETHING WORTHWHILE.
"FIRST, HAVING LEARNED VOGELBAUM'S LOCATION FROM THE LEGEND, I ANONYMOUSLY SENT THE DETAILS TO THE C.E.O.S OF BOEING, DOW, GENERAL DYNAMICS AND SEVERAL OTHER MAJOR VOUGHT COMPETITORS. THEN I WAITED FOR THEM TO CHECK THE INFORMATION AND ACT."
"THEN I FOLLOWED HIS ABDUCTORS TO THEIR INITIAL R.V. AND ELIMINATED THEM, PRIOR TO DOING THE SAME TO VOGELBAUM.
"HE'D CREATED STORMFRONT FOR THE NAZIS, THEN TURNED THE KID OVER TO V.A. AND STARTED A SUPE PROGRAM UP FOR THEM. IT WAS HIS CREATIONS THAT GOT MY BATTALION SLAUGHTERED. HE'D GIVEN US THE HOMELANDER, BLACK NOIR, THE WHOLE ARYAN DREAM MADE REAL, AND GOD ONLY KNEW WHAT HIS EXPERIMENTS WOULD ENABLE VOUGHT TO DO IN THE FUTURE..."
AND...WHEN IT CAME TO IT...I DIDN'T HAVE IT IN ME TO SHOOT A WHIMPERING LITTLE SEVENTY YEAR-OLD MAN.

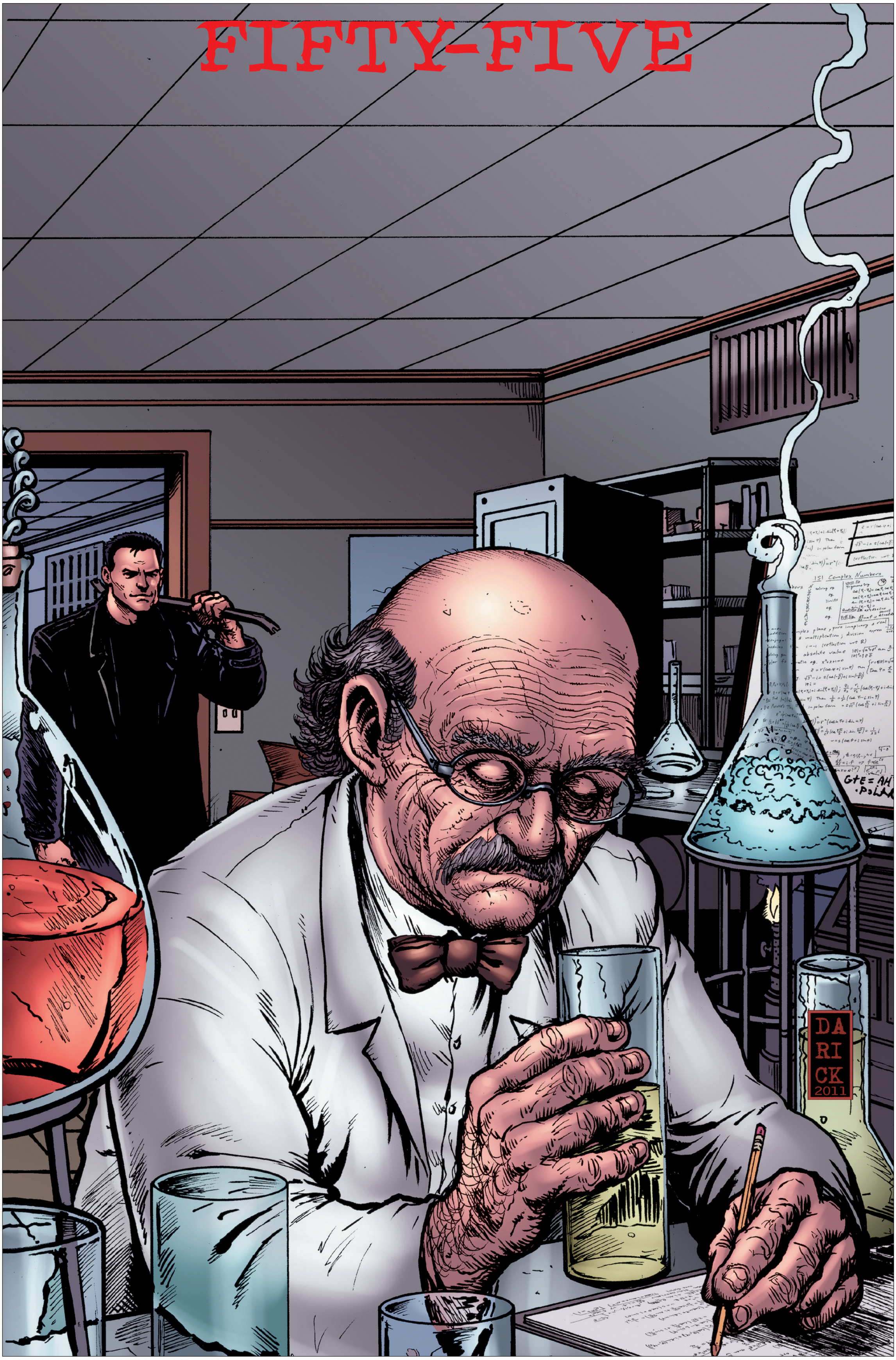

"HE WAS THE CLASSIC SCATTERBRAINED ACADEMIC, HIDING IN HIS WORK FROM THE MEMORY OF HIS FAMILY'S MURDER. HIDING FROM THE REALITY OF WHERE HIS WORK WAS HEADED, COME TO THAT.
"HE PUT ME IN MIND OF OPPENHEIMER: REALIZING FAR TOO LATE EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS THAT HE'D ACHIEVED, BEGGING TRUMAN NOT TO USE IT."
AND KILLING HIM WOULDN'T STOP VOUGHT. EVEN IF THEY COULDN'T REPLICATE HIS WORK, THE ENTIRE LINE-UP OF THE SEVEN WAS ALREADY ESTABLISHED.
SO I DECIDED HE WOULD COME AND WORK FOR UNCLE SAM. OR ME, AT ANY RATE.
SO WHY DOES EVERYONE THINK HE SLASHED HIS WRISTS, THEN?
THERE ARE CERTAIN FREELANCERS THE AGENCY EMPLOYS TO PROVIDE CADAVERS--LOOKALIKES, ESSENTIALLY. IT HAPPENS OFF THE BOOKS WITH PAYMENTS IN CASH. NO ONE IN AUTHORITY WANTS TO KNOW.
A RECENTLY-DECEASED GERIATRIC MALE--RIGHT HEIGHT AND WEIGHT, BEATEN BEYOND RECOGNITION WHEN HE RESISTED HIS ABDUCTORS, RADIAL AND ULNAR ARTERIES OPEN--WAS NOT HARD TO LOCATE. SAID ABDUCTORS WERE NEVER FOUND; THEY OBVIOUSLY ABSCONDED WHEN THEY REALIZED THEY'D KILLED THE STAR PRIZE.
"I DECIDED TO GO TO BURNHAM. HE MIGHT NOT HAVE SEEN V.A. AS A THREAT, INITIALLY, BUT HE WAS A FIERCELY LOYAL COMPANY MAN--AND I HAD A FEELING HE WAS HEADED ALL THE WAY TO THE TOP. WHEN I TOLD HIM WHAT VOGELBAUM TOLD ME, HE REACTED EXACTLY LIKE I HOPED.
"HE WAS *LIVID* THAT VOUGHT HAD KEPT SUCH AN OBVIOUS NATIONAL SECURITY ASSET TO THEMSELVES. ***WHO DID VON BRAUN BELONG TO, NASA OR FUCKING McDONNELL DOUGLAS,*** WAS HOW HE PUT IT.
"ALL OF A SUDDEN, SOMEONE WAS ON MY SIDE."
UP TO A POINT. I KNEW RICK'S FIRST INSTINCT WOULD BE TO START VOGELBAUM WORKING ON SUPES FOR US, UNDER OUR OWN PROGRAM--WHICH WAS EXACTLY WHAT I DIDN'T WANT.
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO CONTROLS THE PURSE STRINGS, YOU CAN'T PUT A HUMAN BRAIN BEHIND POWER LIKE THAT AND EXPECT ANY GOOD TO COME OF IT...


"SO I BRIEFED THE OLD MAN MYSELF. VERY CAREFULLY, VERY PRECISELY. HE'D WOKEN UP TO THE DISASTROUS POTENTIAL OF WHAT HE'D CREATED; IT DIDN'T TAKE MUCH FOR HIM TO PLAY BALL.
"HIS WORK HAD TO BECOME PROHIBITIVELY EXPENSIVE--AND IT DID. IT HAD TO TAKE A LONG, LONG TIME TO BEAR FRUIT--NO PROBLEMS THERE. IT COULD NOT, ***EVER,*** RESULT IN ANYTHING ***LIKE*** A SUPERHUMAN THAT THE U.S. ARMY WOULD CONSIDER USING ON THE BATTLEFIELD...
"VOGELBAUM WAS THREE FOR THREE."
SO WHEN I EVENTUALLY DID PRESENT HIS MAGIC FORMULA TO RICK, SEVEN OR EIGHT YEARS LATER, IT WAS WHAT I'D ASKED FOR: A ONE-SHOT INJECTION OF V THAT INCREASED STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE BY A FACTOR OF ABOUT TWENTY. IT DIDN'T MAKE YOU FLY AND IT DIDN'T MAKE YOU BULLETPROOF.
JESUS, IT TOOK HIM LONG ENOUGH, SAYS RICK, HOW MUCH DID IT END UP COSTING? AND I TELL HIM, AND THAT'S WHEN HE HAS HIS FIRST HEART ATTACK.
"HE'D ORGANIZED A BUDGET AND LEFT ME TO DRAW ON IT AS I SAW FIT, AND I'D MADE THE MOST OF THE OPPORTUNITY. THESE WERE THE DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES; IRAN-CONTRA HAD YET TO COME ALONG TO SPOIL THE FUN.
"I WASN'T WORRIED ABOUT RICK. HE WAS TOUGH, HE WAS A SHREWD OPERATOR, AND HE ALWAYS MADE THE MOST OF A BAD SITUATION. I WAS COUNTING ON THAT ONE IN PARTICULAR FOR HIS RETURN."
YOU'RE NO' VERY SENTIMENTAL ABOUT EACH OTHER, ARE YOU...?
WE'RE THE GREATEST GENERATION, KID. WHISKEY AND IRON AND GUTS AND GLORY.
BESIDES, I WAS RIGHT. HE WAS BACK INSIDE A YEAR, AND TWO YEARS AFTER THAT HE WAS DIRECTOR OF THE AGENCY: BODIES BURIED AND SKELETONS SHUT AWAY.
I'D BEEN QUIET, LETTING HIM COOL DOWN. BUT I PICKED MY MOMENT AND MADE MY PITCH.


"WE'D NEVER HAVE OUR ARMY OF SUPES, WE JUST COULDN'T AFFORD IT--AND WE COULDN'T ANNOUNCE WHAT WE DID HAVE, EITHER, OR CONGRESS WOULD HANG, DRAW AND QUARTER US OVER WHAT WE'D SPENT. BUT WE COULD HAVE OPERATIVES TO OPPOSE SUPES, AND THE WAY THINGS WERE MOVING, WE WERE GOING TO NEED THEM.
"THIS WAS AROUND EIGHTY-FIVE, AND VOUGHT HAD ADDED THE G-MEN TO THE ROSTER. ALL MANNER OF OTHERS, TOO, THEY SHOWED NO SIGN OF SLOWING DOWN."
"I KNEW WHAT THEY WERE SELLING. SO DID RICK. AND WE KNEW IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE WIND CHANGED, AND THEY BOUGHT THE VOTES THEY NEEDED ON THE HILL.
"SO MY PITCH WAS A TEAM. CREATED TO DO ONE JOB AND ONE JOB ONLY, AIMED LIKE A BULLET AT THE HEART OF THE VOUGHT-AMERICAN SUPERHUMAN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. WE WOULD MANAGE, WE WOULD POLICE, WE WOULD LIQUIDATE WHEN NECESSARY.
"WE WOULD NEVER LET THEM GET COMFORTABLE ENOUGH TO BEGIN THE NEXT STAGE OF THEIR AGENDA."
"THE TINY RESERVE OF ONE-SHOT V THAT WE DID HAVE WOULD BE USED TO EMPOWER OUR OPERATIVES. FOR WHICH, OF COURSE, WE NEEDED A GUINEA PIG."


SOMEBODY HAD TO BE FIRST.
BUT...
DID YOU NO' SAY THAT TEAMS WEREN'T REALLY THE WAY TO GO? 'CAUSE OF ALL THE WAYS THEY CAN TURN OUT WRONG?
I DID.
I DID INDEED.
BUT HINDSIGHT'S ALWAYS TWENTY-TWENTY, ISN'T IT?
I STARTED LOOKING FOR LIKELY CANDIDATES, AND IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE I FIRST RAN ACROSS BUTCHER.
next: OUTSIDE IN THE COLD DISTANCE

FIFTY-FIVE


151 Complex Numbers
G+E = AH
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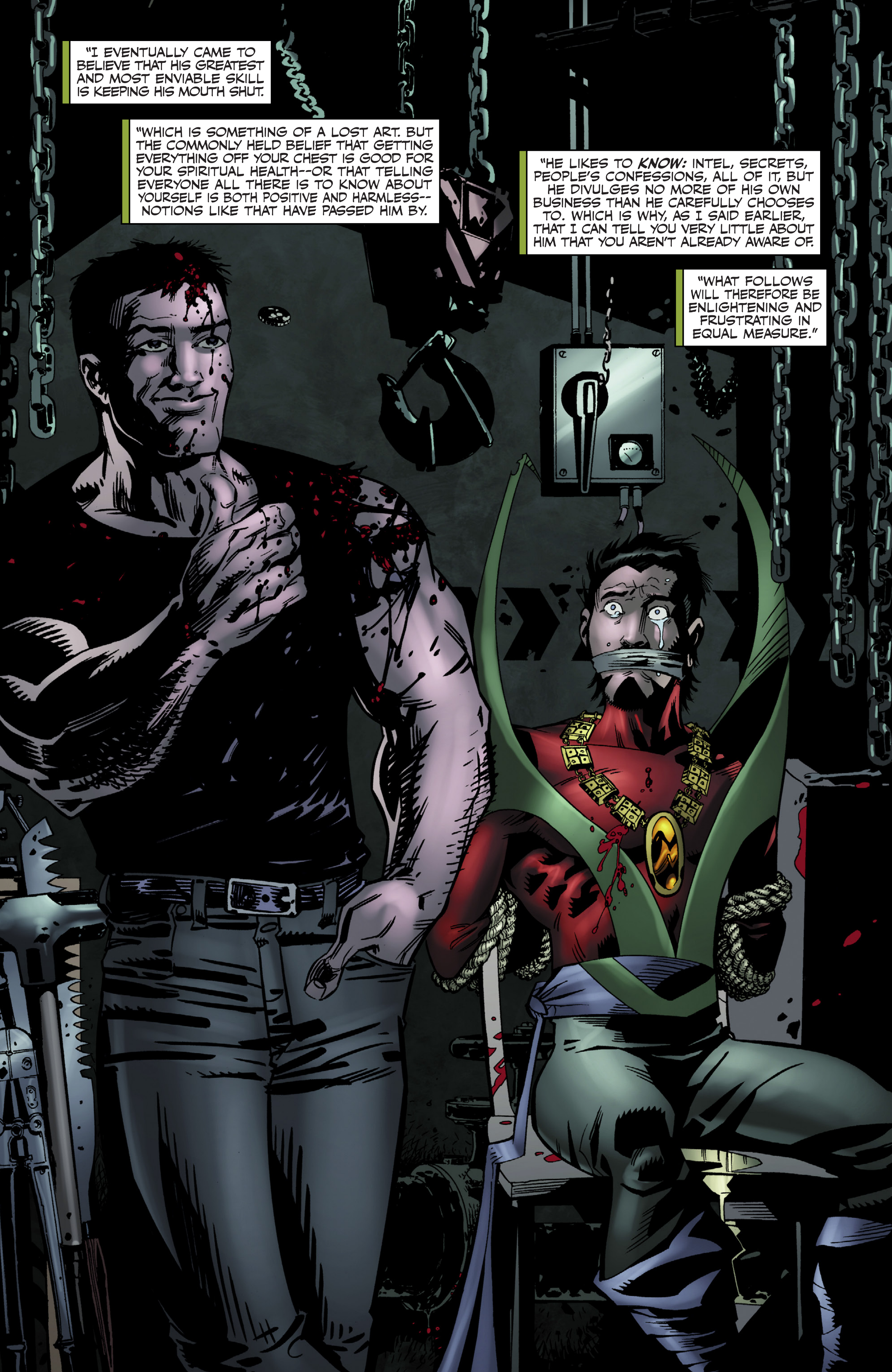
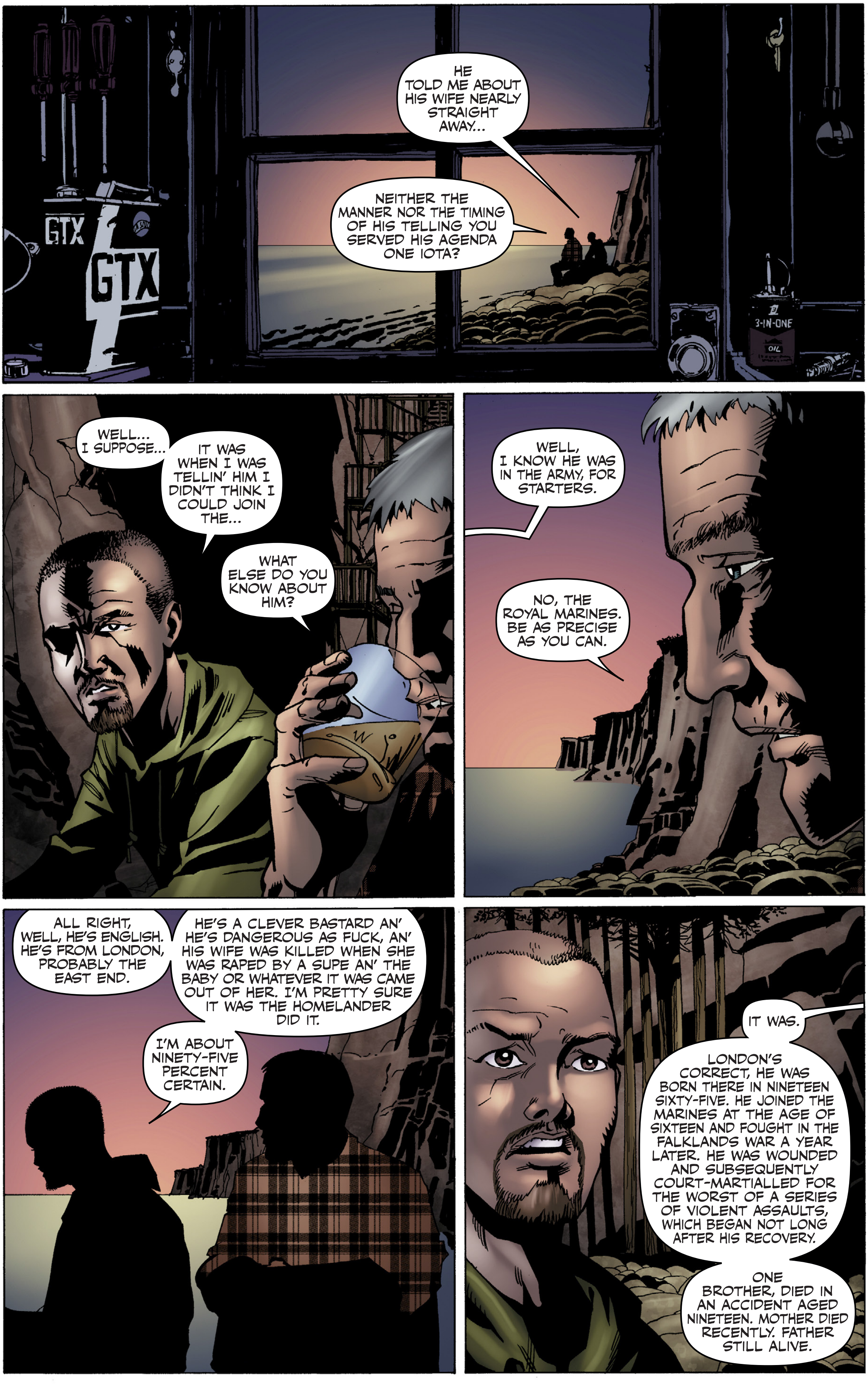
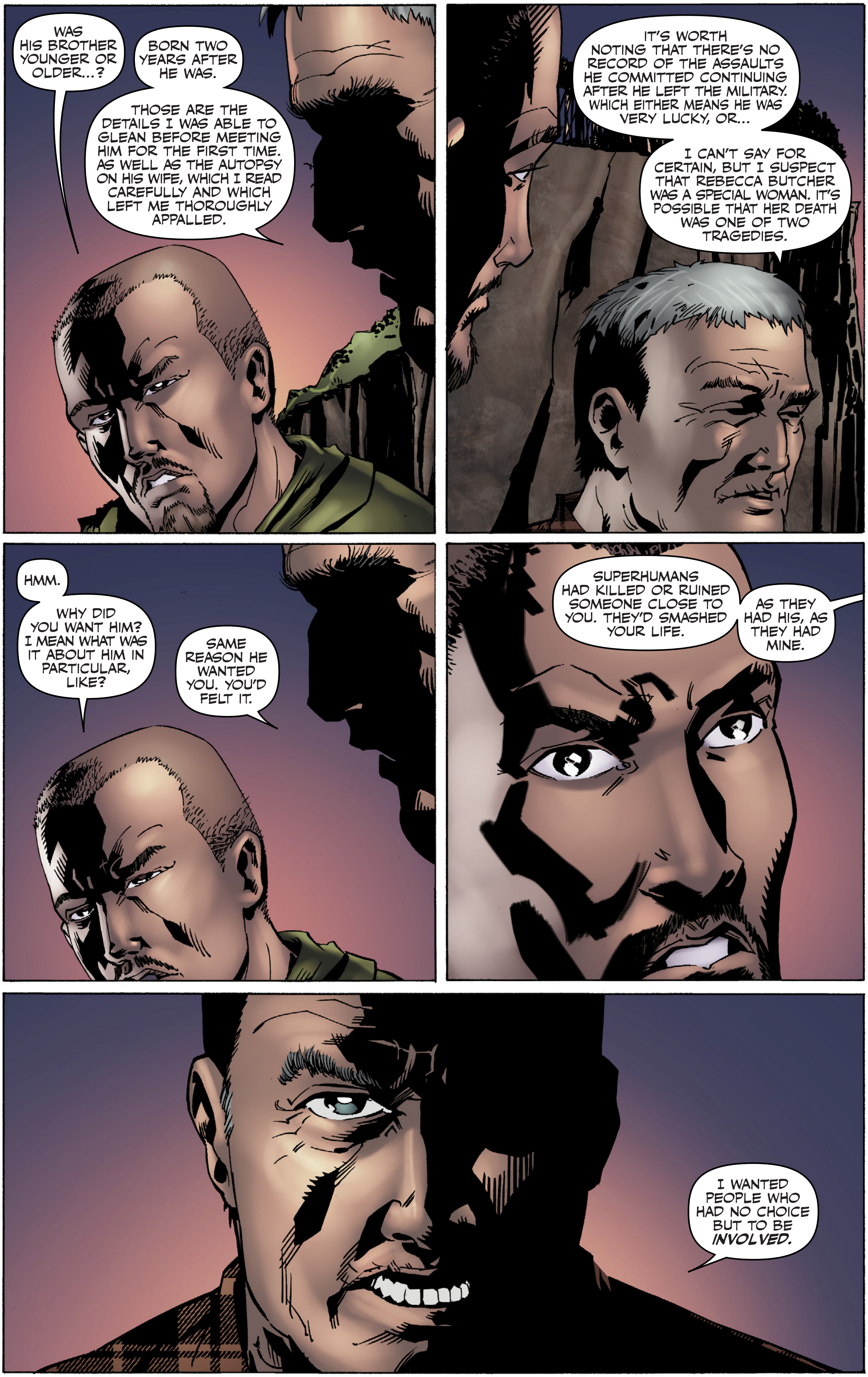
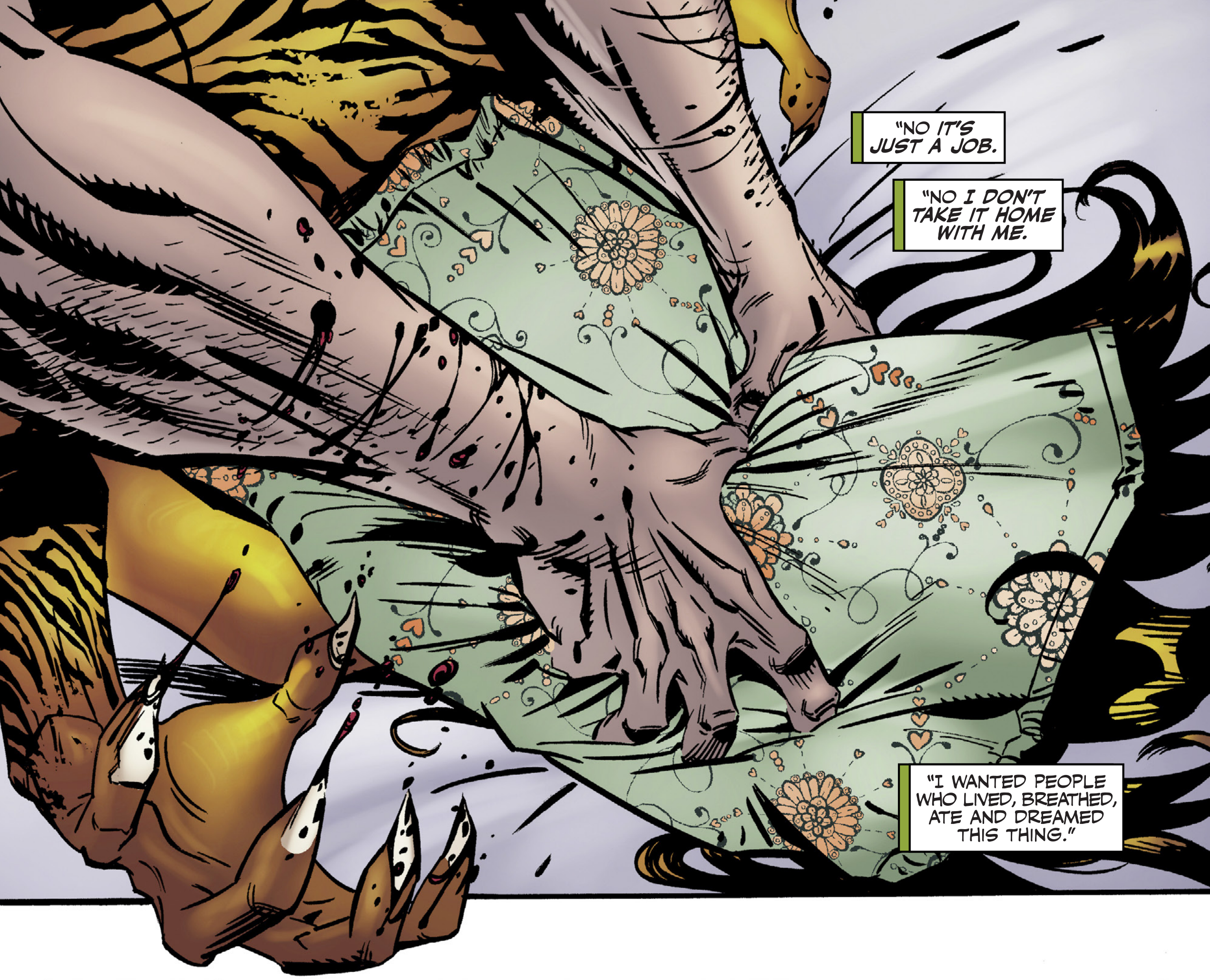
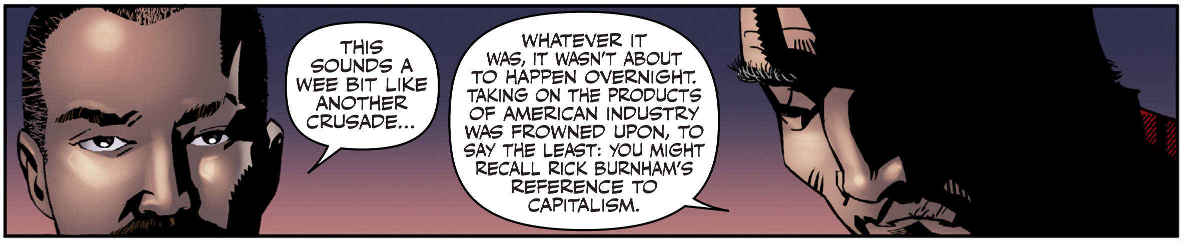
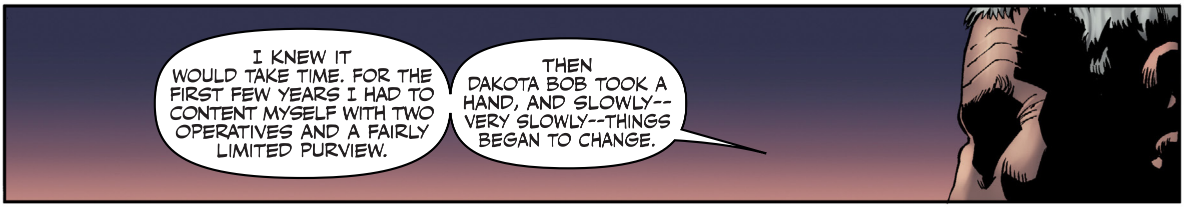

"I EVENTUALLY CAME TO BELIEVE THAT HIS GREATEST AND MOST ENVIABLE SKILL IS KEEPING HIS MOUTH SHUT.
"WHICH IS SOMETHING OF A LOST ART. BUT THE COMMONLY HELD BELIEF THAT GETTING EVERYTHING OFF YOUR CHEST IS GOOD FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH--OR THAT TELLING EVERYONE ALL THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT YOURSELF IS BOTH POSITIVE AND HARMLESS--NOTIONS LIKE THAT HAVE PASSED HIM BY.
"HE LIKES TO ***KNOW:*** INTEL, SECRETS, PEOPLE'S CONFESSIONS, ALL OF IT, BUT HE DIVULGES NO MORE OF HIS OWN BUSINESS THAN HE CAREFULLY CHOOSES TO. WHICH IS WHY, AS I SAID EARLIER, THAT I CAN TELL YOU VERY LITTLE ABOUT HIM THAT YOU AREN'T ALREADY AWARE OF.
"WHAT FOLLOWS WILL THEREFORE BE ENLIGHTENING AND FRUSTRATING IN EQUAL MEASURE."

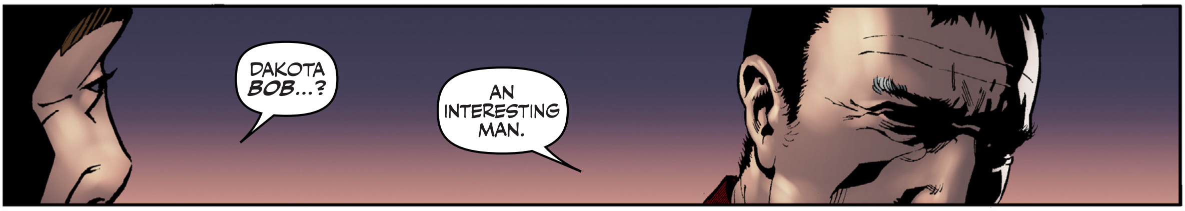

GTX
GTX
3-IN-ONE
OIL
HE TOLD ME ABOUT HIS WIFE NEARLY STRAIGHT AWAY...
NEITHER THE MANNER NOR THE TIMING OF HIS TELLING YOU SERVED HIS AGENDA ONE IOTA?
WELL... I SUPPOSE...
IT WAS WHEN I WAS TELLIN' HIM I DIDN'T THINK I COULD JOIN THE...
WHAT ELSE DO YOU KNOW ABOUT HIM?
WELL, I KNOW HE WAS IN THE ARMY, FOR STARTERS.
NO, THE ROYAL MARINES. BE AS PRECISE AS YOU CAN.
ALL RIGHT, WELL, HE'S ENGLISH. HE'S FROM LONDON, PROBABLY THE EAST END.
HE'S A CLEVER BASTARD AN' HE'S DANGEROUS AS FUCK, AN' HIS WIFE WAS KILLED WHEN SHE WAS RAPED BY A SUPE AN' THE BABY OR WHATEVER IT WAS CAME OUT OF HER. I'M PRETTY SURE IT WAS THE HOMELANDER DID IT.
I'M ABOUT NINETY-FIVE PERCENT CERTAIN.
IT WAS.
LONDON'S CORRECT, HE WAS BORN THERE IN NINETEEN SIXTY-FIVE. HE JOINED THE MARINES AT THE AGE OF SIXTEEN AND FOUGHT IN THE FALKLANDS WAR A YEAR LATER. HE WAS WOUNDED AND SUBSEQUENTLY COURT-MARTIALLED FOR THE WORST OF A SERIES OF VIOLENT ASSAULTS, WHICH BEGAN NOT LONG AFTER HIS RECOVERY.
ONE BROTHER, DIED IN AN ACCIDENT AGED NINETEEN. MOTHER DIED RECENTLY. FATHER STILL ALIVE.

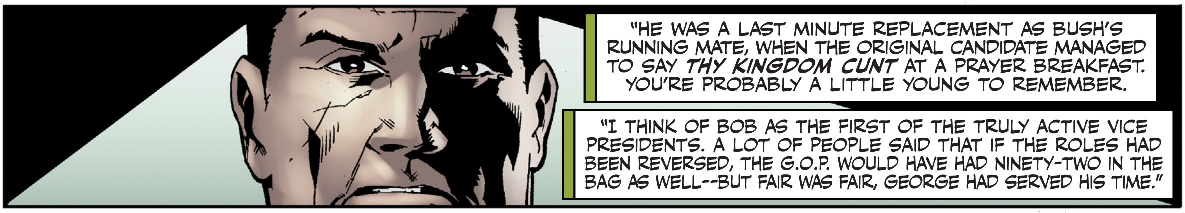

WAS HIS BROTHER YOUNGER OR OLDER...?
BORN TWO YEARS AFTER HE WAS.
THOSE ARE THE DETAILS I WAS ABLE TO GLEAN BEFORE MEETING HIM FOR THE FIRST TIME. AS WELL AS THE AUTOPSY ON HIS WIFE, WHICH I READ CAREFULLY AND WHICH LEFT ME THOROUGHLY APPALLED.
IT'S WORTH NOTING THAT THERE'S NO RECORD OF THE ASSAULTS HE COMMITTED CONTINUING AFTER HE LEFT THE MILITARY. WHICH EITHER MEANS HE WAS VERY LUCKY, OR...
I CAN'T SAY FOR CERTAIN, BUT I SUSPECT THAT REBECCA BUTCHER WAS A SPECIAL WOMAN. IT'S POSSIBLE THAT HER DEATH WAS ONE OF TWO TRAGEDIES.
HMM.
WHY DID YOU WANT HIM? I MEAN WHAT WAS IT ABOUT HIM IN PARTICULAR, LIKE?
SAME REASON HE WANTED YOU. YOU'D FELT IT.
SUPERHUMANS HAD KILLED OR RUINED SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU. THEY'D SMASHED YOUR LIFE.
AS THEY HAD HIS, AS THEY HAD MINE.
I WANTED PEOPLE WHO HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO BE *INVOLVED.*

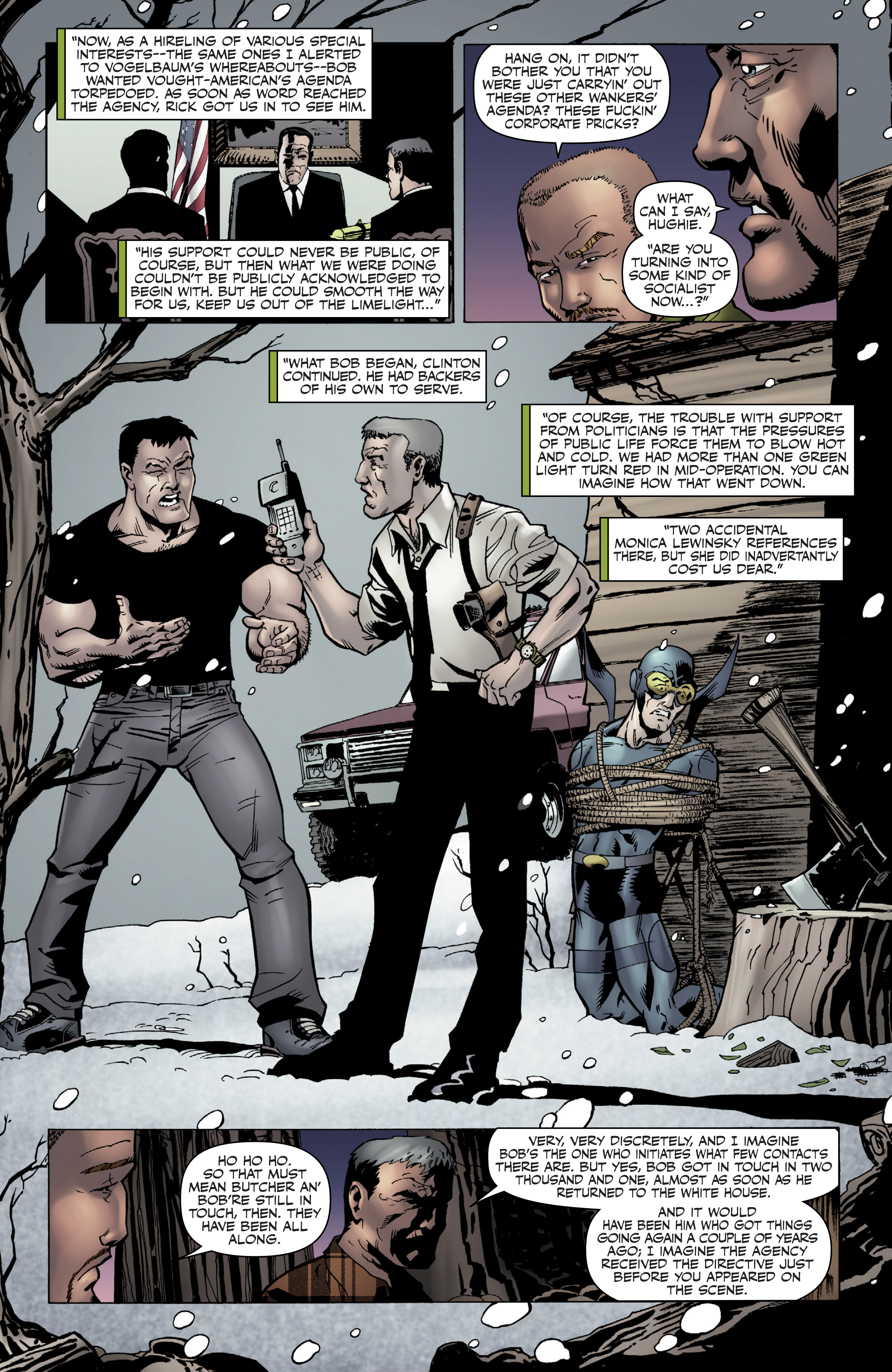

"NO *IT'S JUST A JOB.*
"NO *I DON'T TAKE IT HOME WITH ME.*
"I WANTED PEOPLE WHO LIVED, BREATHED, ATE AND DREAMED THIS THING."

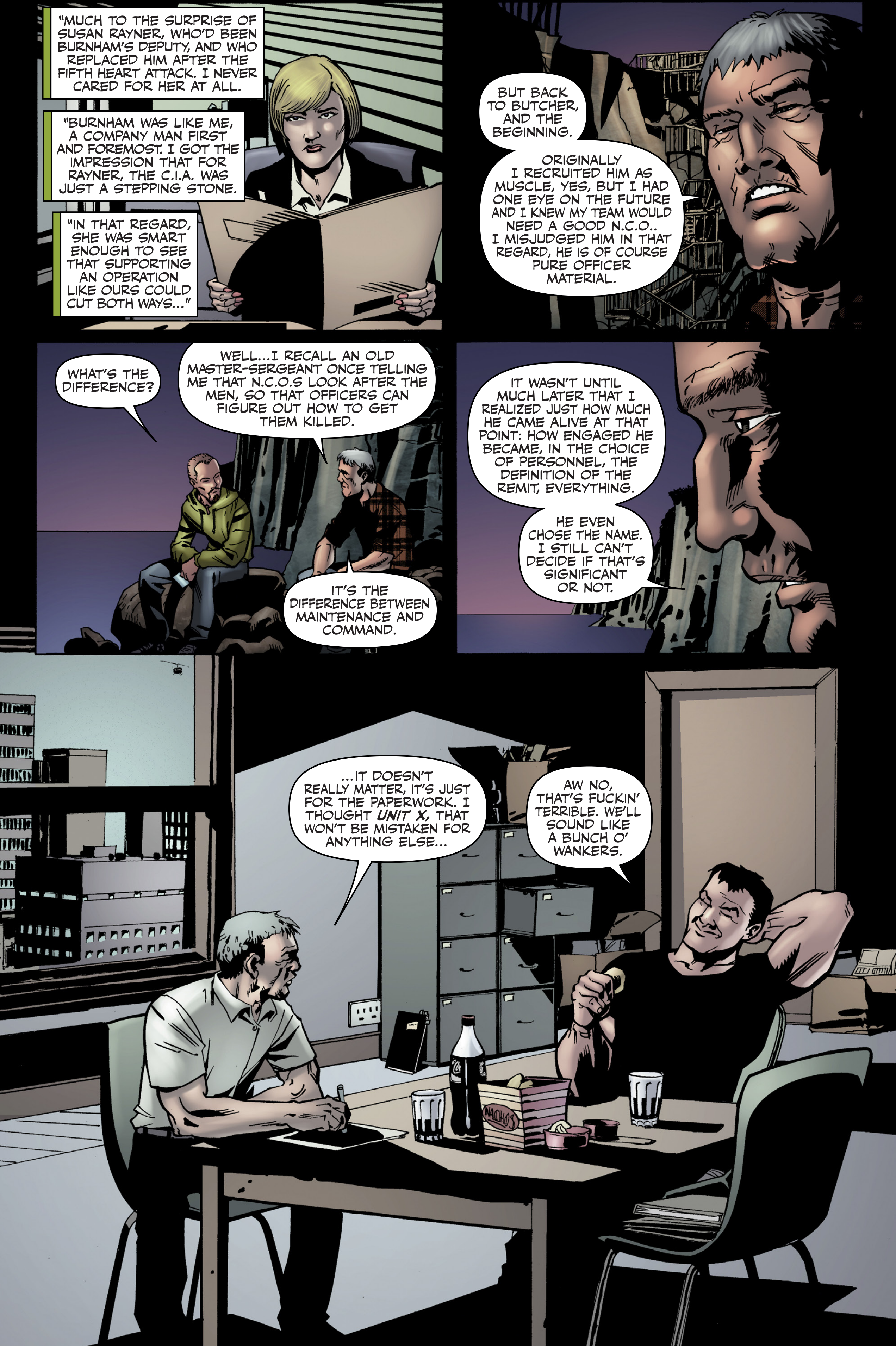

THIS SOUNDS A WEE BIT LIKE ANOTHER CRUSADE...
WHATEVER IT WAS, IT WASN'T ABOUT TO HAPPEN OVERNIGHT. TAKING ON THE PRODUCTS OF AMERICAN INDUSTRY WAS FROWNED UPON, TO SAY THE LEAST: YOU MIGHT RECALL RICK BURNHAM'S REFERENCE TO CAPITALISM.

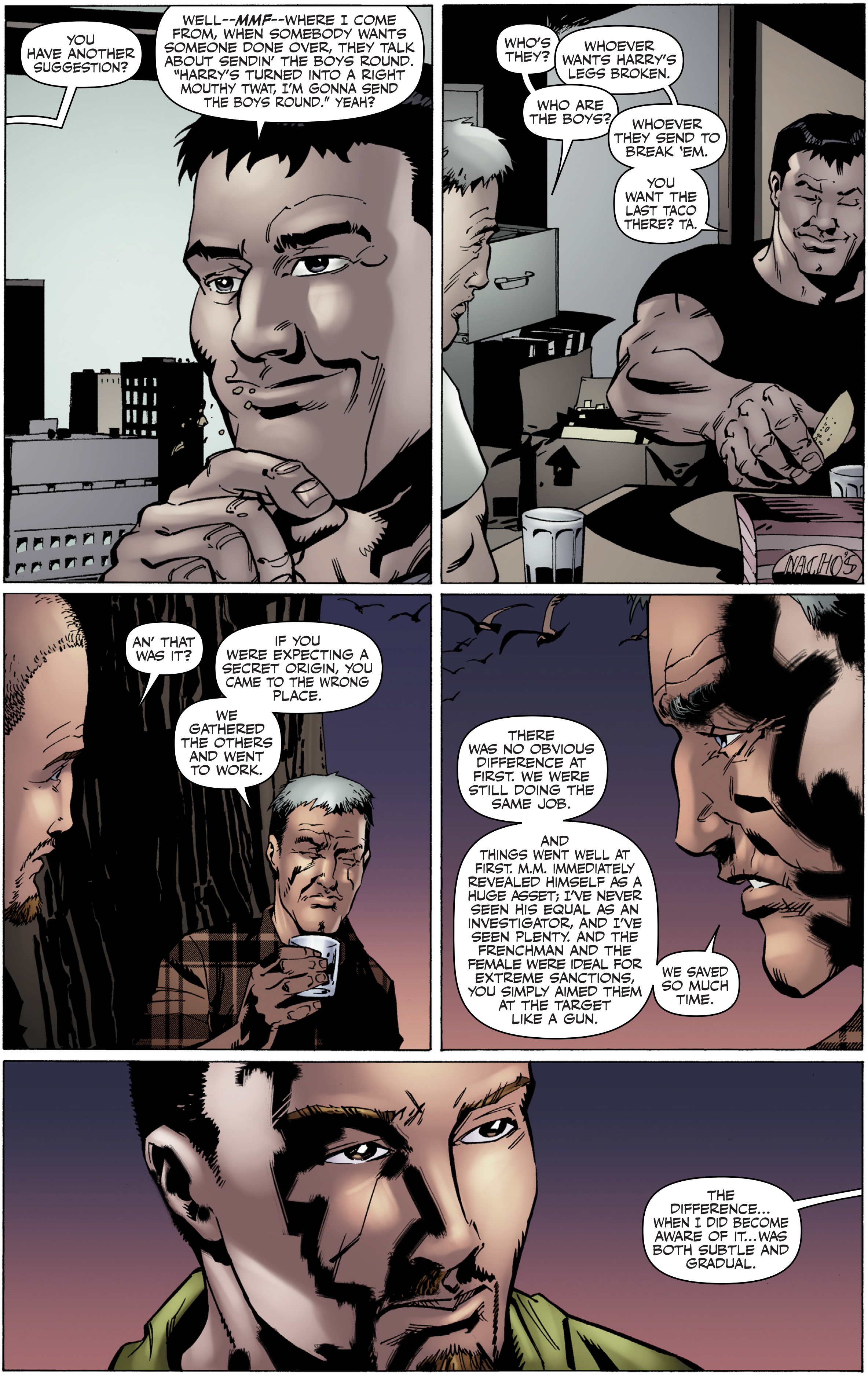

I KNEW IT WOULD TAKE TIME. FOR THE FIRST FEW YEARS I HAD TO CONTENT MYSELF WITH TWO OPERATIVES AND A FAIRLY LIMITED PURVIEW.
THEN DAKOTA BOB TOOK A HAND, AND SLOWLY--VERY SLOWLY--THINGS BEGAN TO CHANGE.

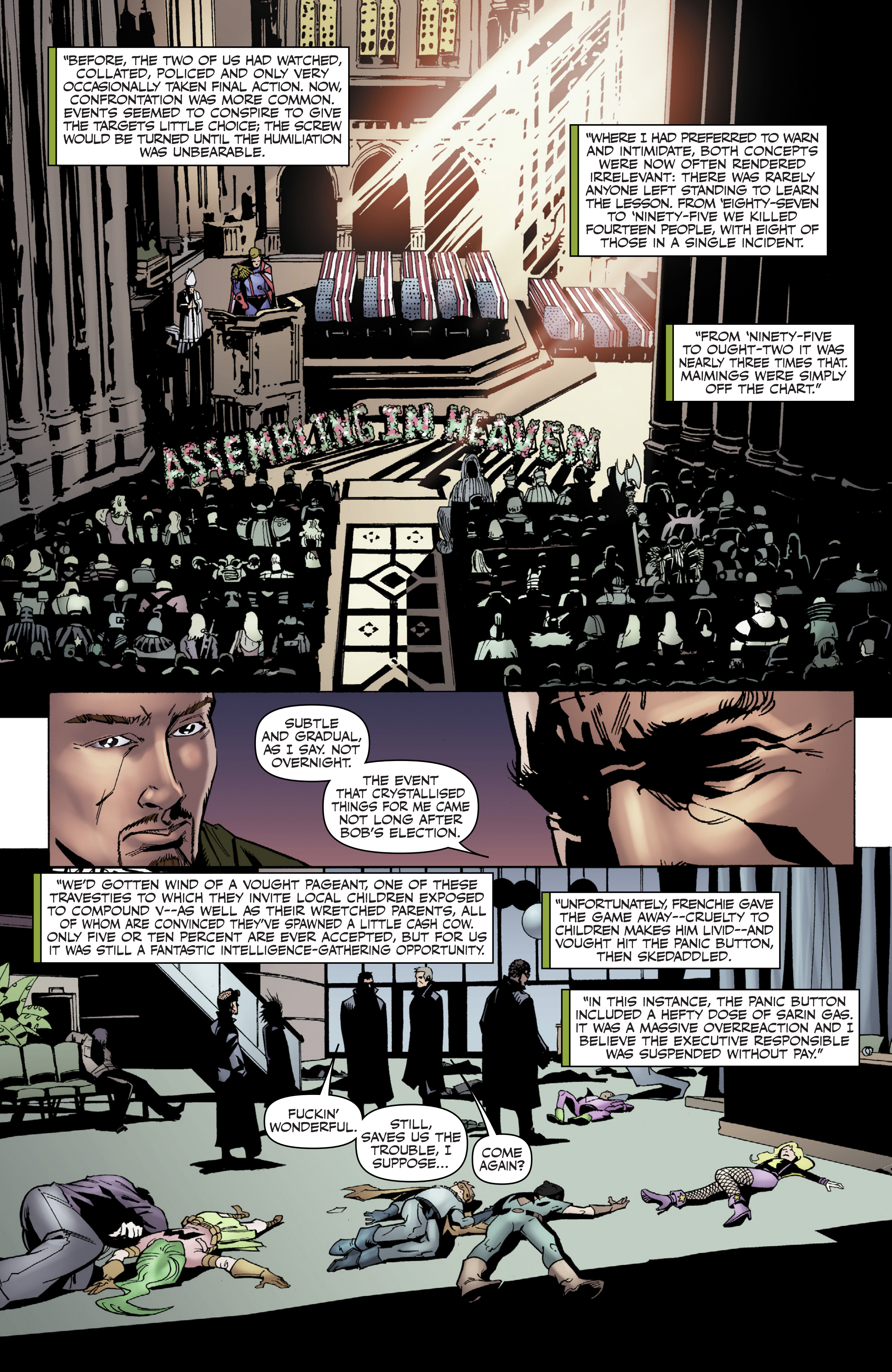

DAKOTA *BOB...?*
AN INTERESTING MAN.

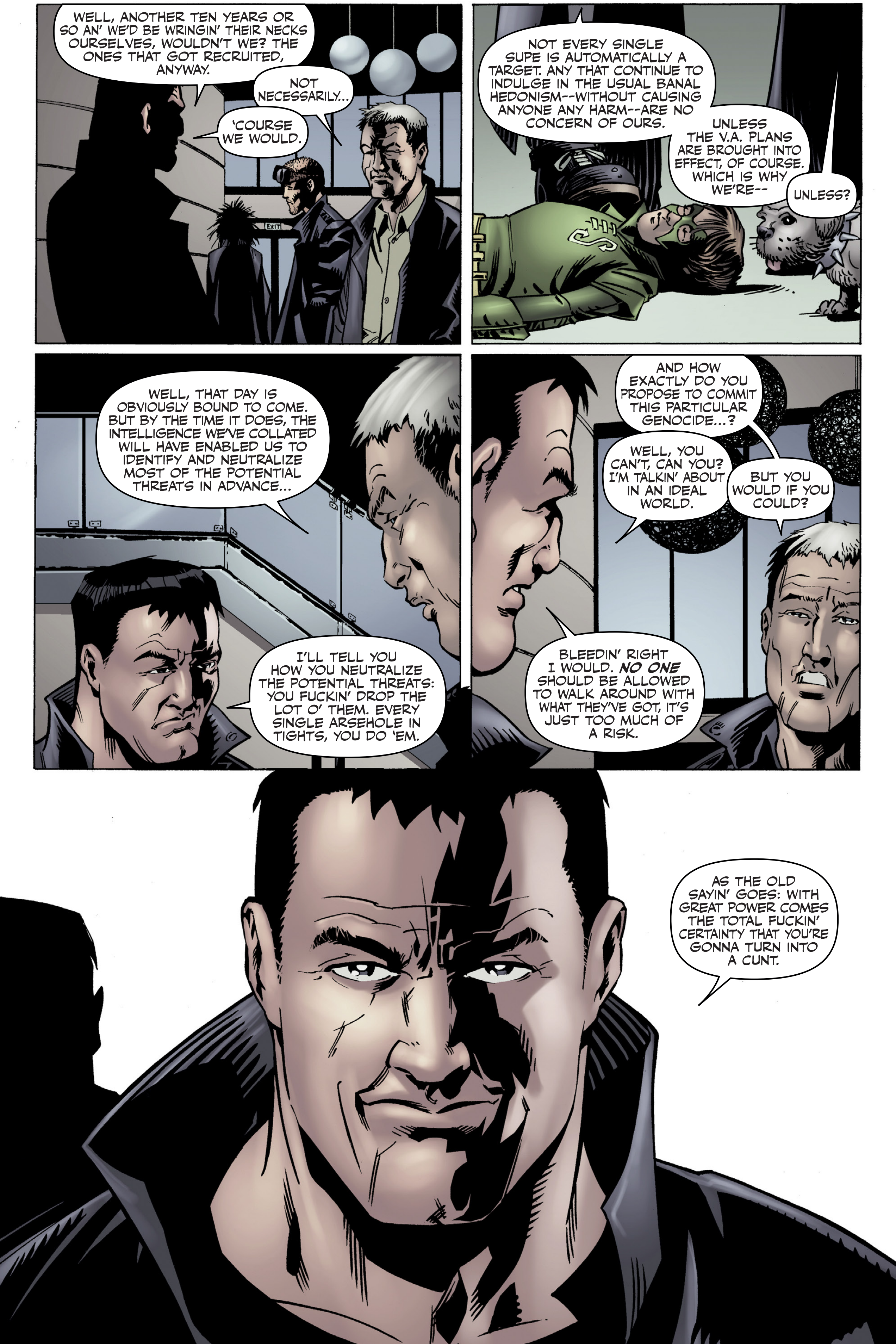

"HE WAS A LAST MINUTE REPLACEMENT AS BUSH'S RUNNING MATE, WHEN THE ORIGINAL CANDIDATE MANAGED TO SAY *THY KINGDOM CUNT* AT A PRAYER BREAKFAST. YOU'RE PROBABLY A LITTLE YOUNG TO REMEMBER.
"I THINK OF BOB AS THE FIRST OF THE TRULY ACTIVE VICE PRESIDENTS. A LOT OF PEOPLE SAID THAT IF THE ROLES HAD BEEN REVERSED, THE G.O.P. WOULD HAVE HAD NINETY-TWO IN THE BAG AS WELL--BUT FAIR WAS FAIR, GEORGE HAD SERVED HIS TIME."

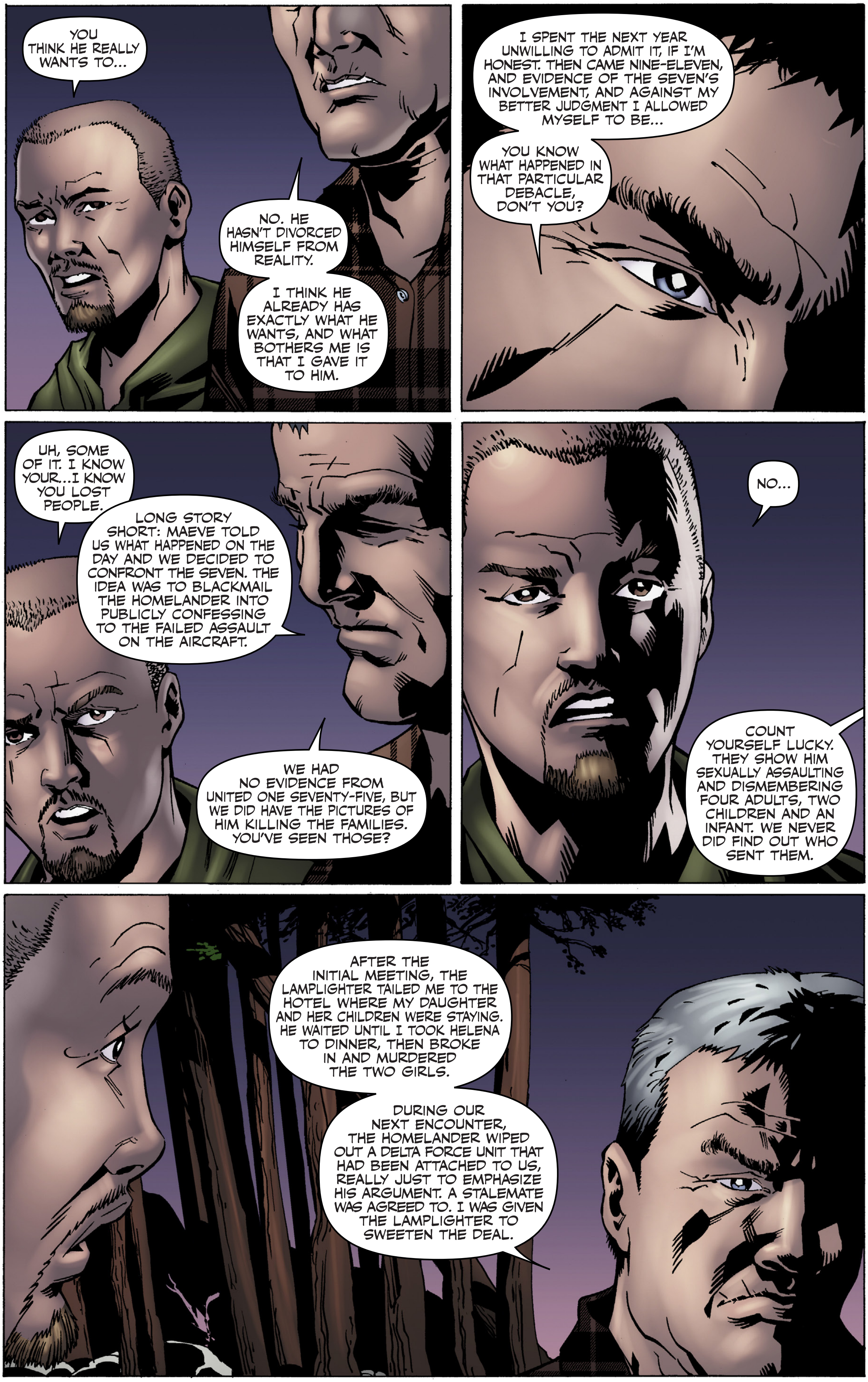

"NOW, AS A HIRELING OF VARIOUS SPECIAL INTERESTS--THE SAME ONES I ALERTED TO VOGELBAUM'S WHEREABOUTS--BOB WANTED VOUGHT-AMERICAN'S AGENDA TORPEDOED. AS SOON AS WORD REACHED THE AGENCY, RICK GOT US IN TO SEE HIM.
"HIS SUPPORT COULD NEVER BE PUBLIC, OF COURSE, BUT THEN WHAT WE WERE DOING COULDN'T BE PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED TO BEGIN WITH. BUT HE COULD SMOOTH THE WAY FOR US, KEEP US OUT OF THE LIMELIGHT..."
HANG ON, IT DIDN'T BOTHER YOU THAT YOU WERE JUST CARRYIN' OUT THESE OTHER WANKERS' AGENDA? THESE FUCKIN' CORPORATE PRICKS?
WHAT CAN I SAY, HUGHIE.
"ARE YOU TURNING INTO SOME KIND OF SOCIALIST NOW...?"
"WHAT BOB BEGAN, CLINTON CONTINUED. HE HAD BACKERS OF HIS OWN TO SERVE.
"OF COURSE, THE TROUBLE WITH SUPPORT FROM POLITICIANS IS THAT THE PRESSURES OF PUBLIC LIFE FORCE THEM TO BLOW HOT AND COLD. WE HAD MORE THAN ONE GREEN LIGHT TURN RED IN MID-OPERATION. YOU CAN IMAGINE HOW THAT WENT DOWN.
"TWO ACCIDENTAL MONICA LEWINSKY REFERENCES THERE, BUT SHE DID INADVERTANTLY COST US DEAR."
HO HO HO. SO THAT MUST MEAN BUTCHER AN' BOB'RE STILL IN TOUCH, THEN. THEY HAVE BEEN ALL ALONG.
VERY, VERY DISCRETELY, AND I IMAGINE BOB'S THE ONE WHO INITIATES WHAT FEW CONTACTS THERE ARE. BUT YES, BOB GOT IN TOUCH IN TWO THOUSAND AND ONE, ALMOST AS SOON AS HE RETURNED TO THE WHITE HOUSE.
AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN HIM WHO GOT THINGS GOING AGAIN A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO; I IMAGINE THE AGENCY RECEIVED THE DIRECTIVE JUST BEFORE YOU APPEARED ON THE SCENE.

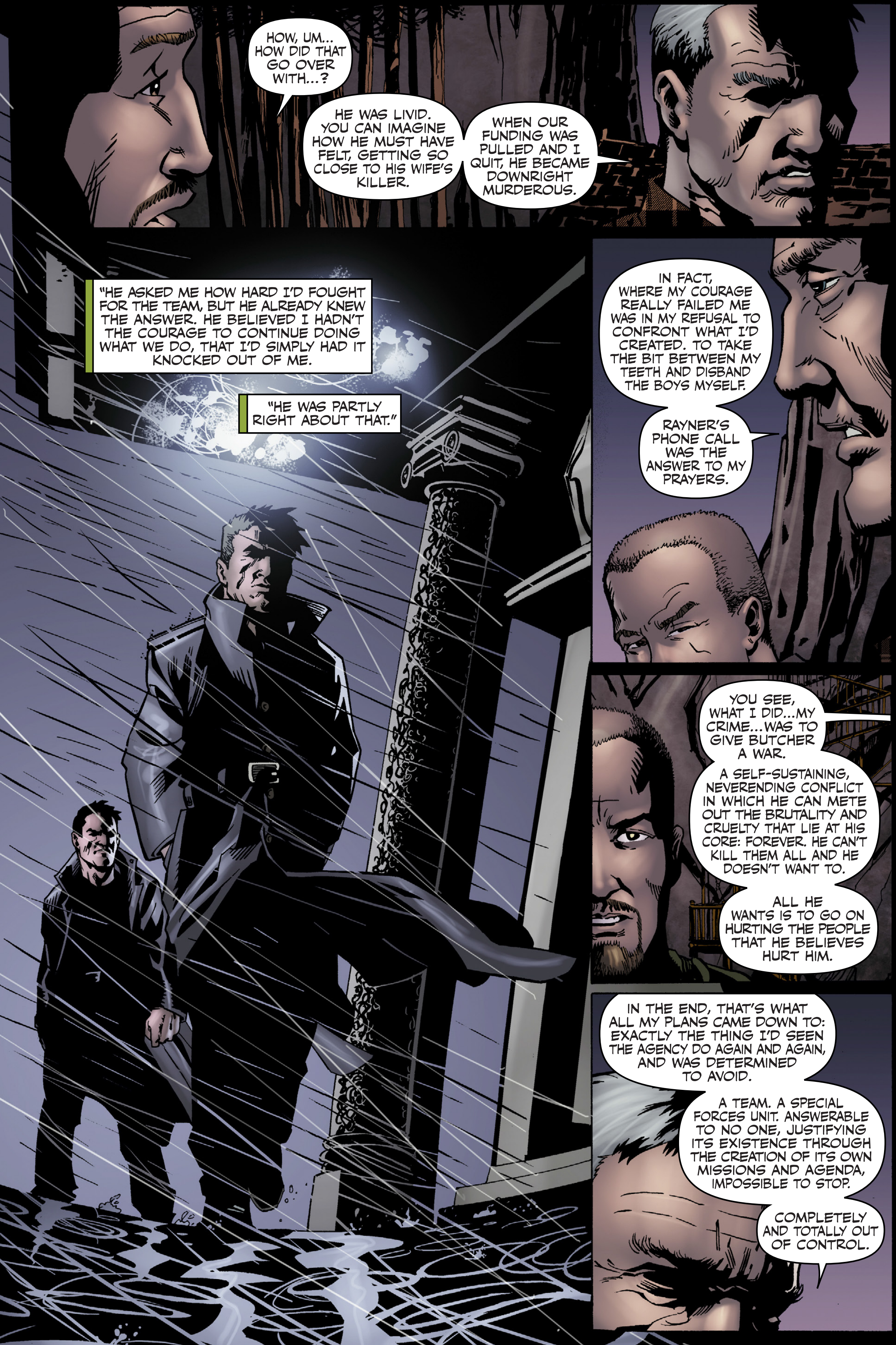

"MUCH TO THE SURPRISE OF SUSAN RAYNER, WHO'D BEEN BURNHAM'S DEPUTY, AND WHO REPLACED HIM AFTER THE FIFTH HEART ATTACK. I NEVER CARED FOR HER AT ALL.
"BURNHAM WAS LIKE ME, A COMPANY MAN FIRST AND FOREMOST. I GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT FOR RAYNER, THE C.I.A. WAS JUST A STEPPING STONE.
"IN THAT REGARD, SHE WAS SMART ENOUGH TO SEE THAT SUPPORTING AN OPERATION LIKE OURS COULD CUT BOTH WAYS..."
BUT BACK TO BUTCHER, AND THE BEGINNING.
ORIGINALLY I RECRUITED HIM AS MUSCLE, YES, BUT I HAD ONE EYE ON THE FUTURE AND I KNEW MY TEAM WOULD NEED A GOOD N.C.O.. I MISJUDGED HIM IN THAT REGARD, HE IS OF COURSE PURE OFFICER MATERIAL.
WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?
WELL...I RECALL AN OLD MASTER-SERGEANT ONCE TELLING ME THAT N.C.O.S LOOK AFTER THE MEN, SO THAT OFFICERS CAN FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET THEM KILLED.
IT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MAINTENANCE AND COMMAND.
IT WASN'T UNTIL MUCH LATER THAT I REALIZED JUST HOW MUCH HE CAME ALIVE AT THAT POINT: HOW ENGAGED HE BECAME, IN THE CHOICE OF PERSONNEL, THE DEFINITION OF THE REMIT, EVERYTHING.
HE EVEN CHOSE THE NAME. I STILL CAN'T DECIDE IF THAT'S SIGNIFICANT OR NOT.
...IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER, IT'S JUST FOR THE PAPERWORK. I THOUGHT *UNIT X,* THAT WON'T BE MISTAKEN FOR ANYTHING ELSE...
AW NO, THAT'S FUCKIN' TERRIBLE. WE'LL SOUND LIKE A BUNCH O' WANKERS.
NACHOS

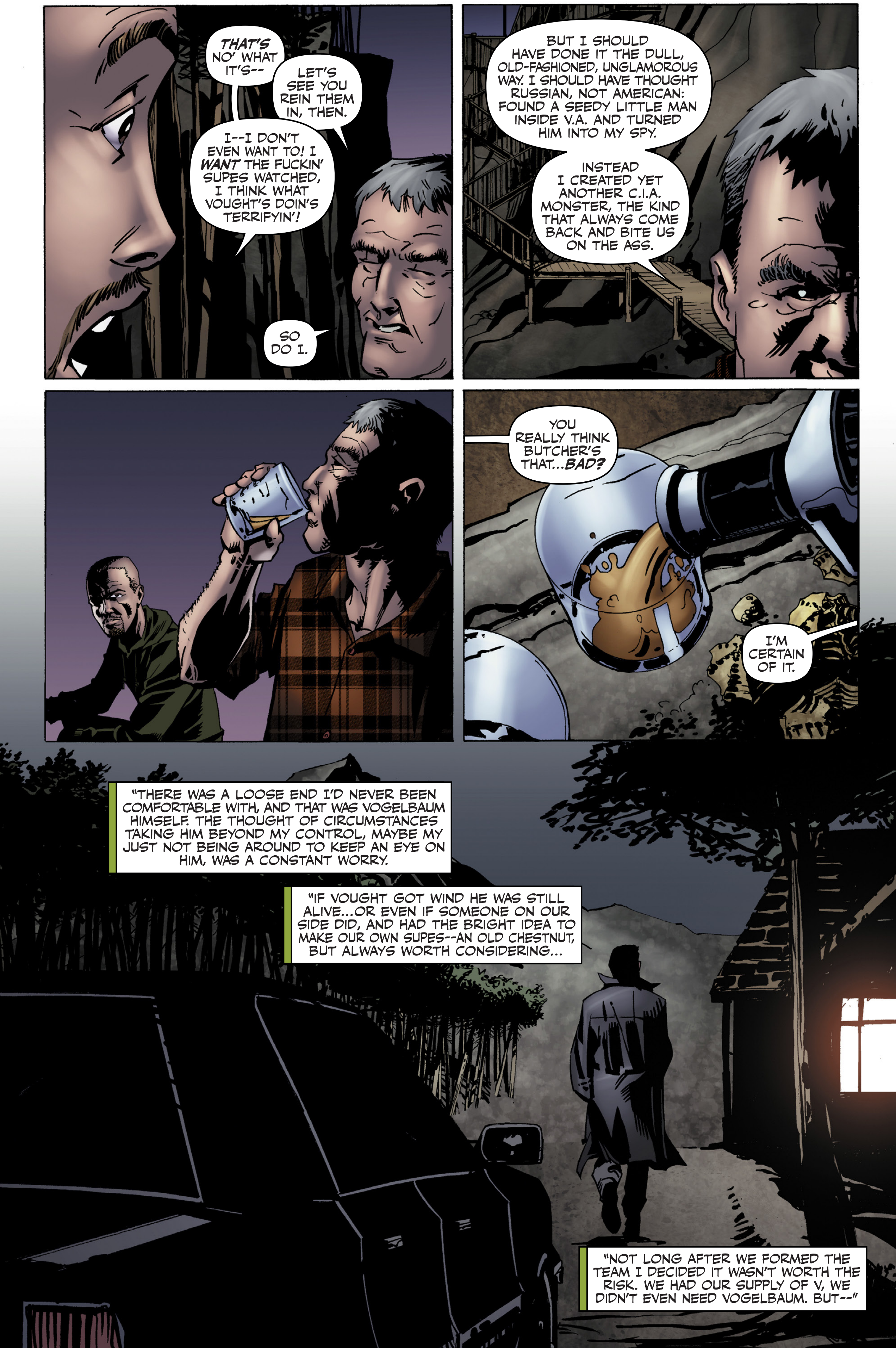

YOU HAVE ANOTHER SUGGESTION?
WELL--*MMF*--WHERE I COME FROM, WHEN SOMEBODY WANTS SOMEONE DONE OVER, THEY TALK ABOUT SENDIN' THE BOYS ROUND. "HARRY'S TURNED INTO A RIGHT MOUTHY TWAT, I'M GONNA SEND THE BOYS ROUND." YEAH?
WHO'S THEY?
WHOEVER WANTS HARRY'S LEGS BROKEN.
WHO ARE THE BOYS?
WHOEVER THEY SEND TO BREAK 'EM.
YOU WANT THE LAST TACO THERE? TA.
NACHO'S
AN' THAT WAS IT?
IF YOU WERE EXPECTING A SECRET ORIGIN, YOU CAME TO THE WRONG PLACE.
WE GATHERED THE OTHERS AND WENT TO WORK.
THERE WAS NO OBVIOUS DIFFERENCE AT FIRST. WE WERE STILL DOING THE SAME JOB.
AND THINGS WENT WELL AT FIRST. M.M. IMMEDIATELY REVEALED HIMSELF AS A HUGE ASSET; I'VE NEVER SEEN HIS EQUAL AS AN INVESTIGATOR, AND I'VE SEEN PLENTY. AND THE FRENCHMAN AND THE FEMALE WERE IDEAL FOR EXTREME SANCTIONS, YOU SIMPLY AIMED THEM AT THE TARGET LIKE A GUN.
WE SAVED SO MUCH TIME.
THE DIFFERENCE... WHEN I DID BECOME AWARE OF IT...WAS BOTH SUBTLE AND GRADUAL.

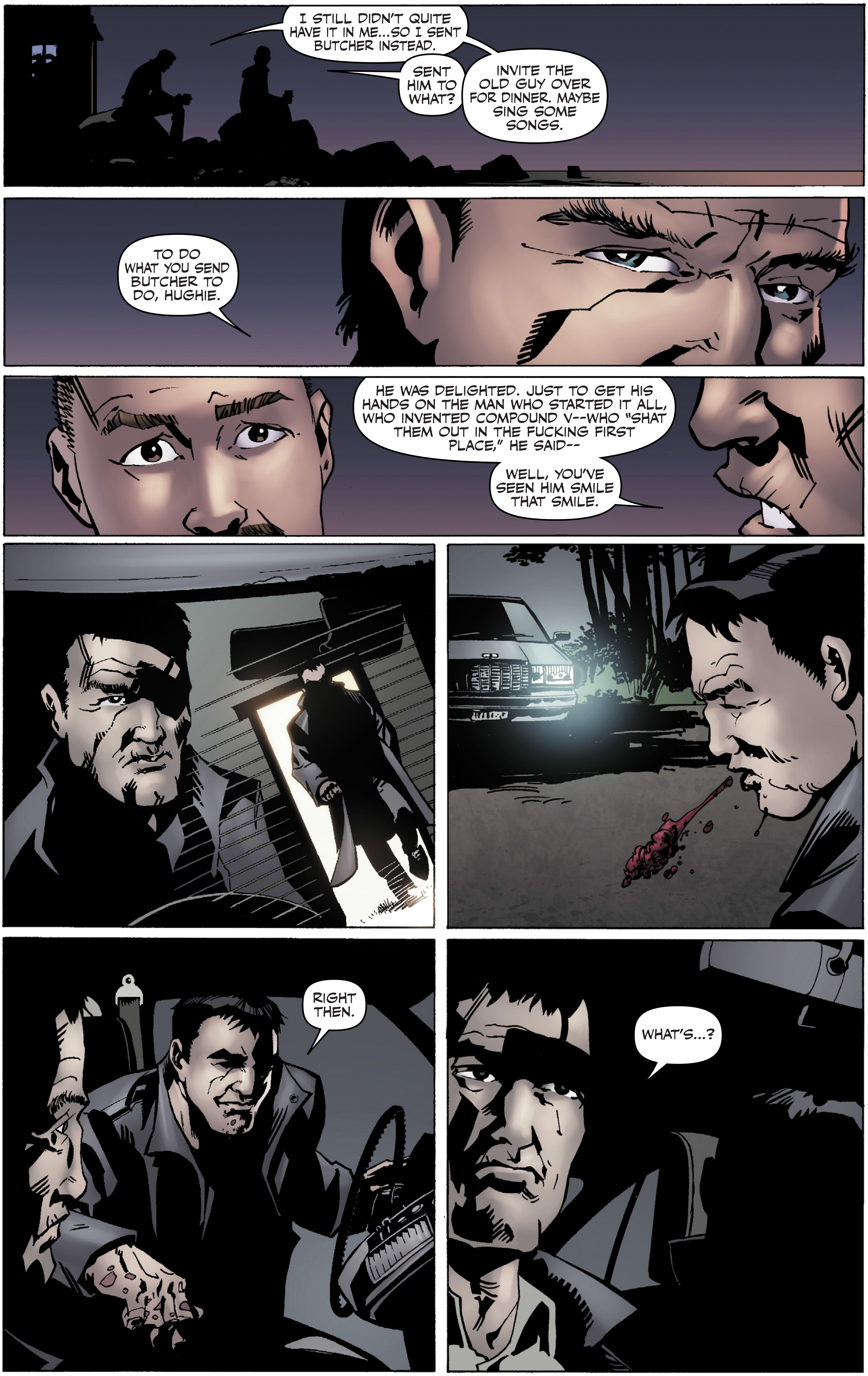

"BEFORE, THE TWO OF US HAD WATCHED, COLLATED, POLICED AND ONLY VERY OCCASIONALLY TAKEN FINAL ACTION. NOW, CONFRONTATION WAS MORE COMMON. EVENTS SEEMED TO CONSPIRE TO GIVE THE TARGETS LITTLE CHOICE; THE SCREW WOULD BE TURNED UNTIL THE HUMILIATION WAS UNBEARABLE.
"WHERE I HAD PREFERRED TO WARN AND INTIMIDATE, BOTH CONCEPTS WERE NOW OFTEN RENDERED IRRELEVANT: THERE WAS RARELY ANYONE LEFT STANDING TO LEARN THE LESSON. FROM 'EIGHTY-SEVEN TO 'NINETY-FIVE WE KILLED FOURTEEN PEOPLE, WITH EIGHT OF THOSE IN A SINGLE INCIDENT.
"FROM 'NINETY-FIVE TO OUGHT-TWO IT WAS NEARLY THREE TIMES THAT. MAIMINGS WERE SIMPLY OFF THE CHART."
ASSEMBLING IN HEAVEN
SUBTLE AND GRADUAL, AS I SAY. NOT OVERNIGHT.
THE EVENT THAT CRYSTALLISED THINGS FOR ME CAME NOT LONG AFTER BOB'S ELECTION.
"WE'D GOTTEN WIND OF A VOUGHT PAGEANT, ONE OF THESE TRAVESTIES TO WHICH THEY INVITE LOCAL CHILDREN EXPOSED TO COMPOUND V--AS WELL AS THEIR WRETCHED PARENTS, ALL OF WHOM ARE CONVINCED THEY'VE SPAWNED A LITTLE CASH COW. ONLY FIVE OR TEN PERCENT ARE EVER ACCEPTED, BUT FOR US IT WAS STILL A FANTASTIC INTELLIGENCE-GATHERING OPPORTUNITY.
"UNFORTUNATELY, FRENCHIE GAVE THE GAME AWAY--CRUELTY TO CHILDREN MAKES HIM LIVID--AND VOUGHT HIT THE PANIC BUTTON, THEN SKEDADDLED.
"IN THIS INSTANCE, THE PANIC BUTTON INCLUDED A HEFTY DOSE OF SARIN GAS. IT WAS A MASSIVE OVERREACTION AND I BELIEVE THE EXECUTIVE RESPONSIBLE WAS SUSPENDED WITHOUT PAY."
FUCKIN' WONDERFUL.
STILL, SAVES US THE TROUBLE, I SUPPOSE...
COME AGAIN?

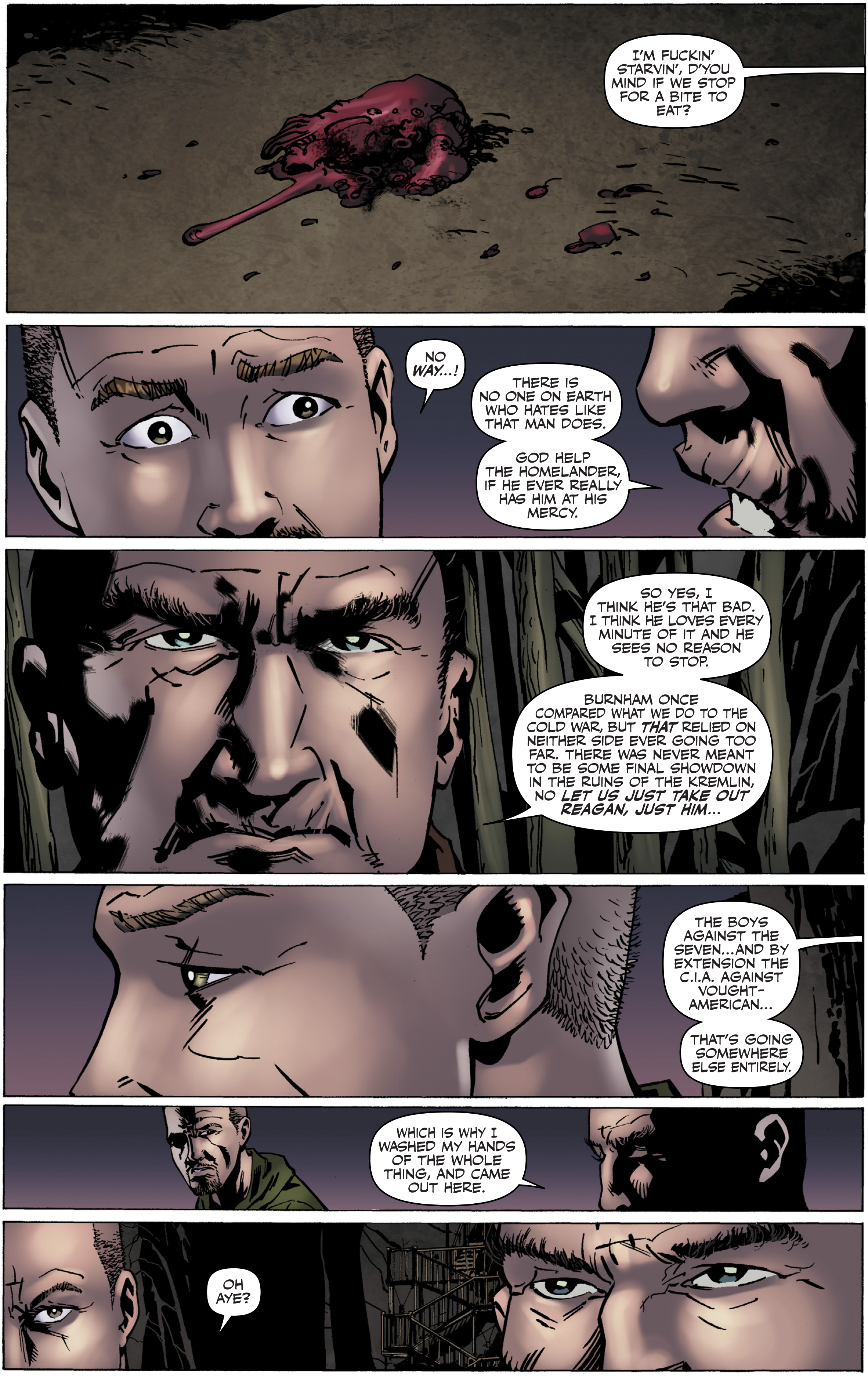

WELL, ANOTHER TEN YEARS OR SO AN' WE'D BE WRINGIN' THEIR NECKS OURSELVES, WOULDN'T WE? THE ONES THAT GOT RECRUITED, ANYWAY.
NOT NECESSARILY...
'COURSE WE WOULD.
EXIT
NOT EVERY SINGLE SUPE IS AUTOMATICALLY A TARGET. ANY THAT CONTINUE TO INDULGE IN THE USUAL BANAL HEDONISM--WITHOUT CAUSING ANYONE ANY HARM--ARE NO CONCERN OF OURS.
UNLESS THE V.A. PLANS ARE BROUGHT INTO EFFECT, OF COURSE. WHICH IS WHY WE'RE--
UNLESS?
WELL, THAT DAY IS OBVIOUSLY BOUND TO COME. BUT BY THE TIME IT DOES, THE INTELLIGENCE WE'VE COLLATED WILL HAVE ENABLED US TO IDENTIFY AND NEUTRALIZE MOST OF THE POTENTIAL THREATS IN ADVANCE...
I'LL TELL YOU HOW YOU NEUTRALIZE THE POTENTIAL THREATS: YOU FUCKIN' DROP THE LOT O' THEM. EVERY SINGLE ARSEHOLE IN TIGHTS, YOU DO 'EM.
AND HOW EXACTLY DO YOU PROPOSE TO COMMIT THIS PARTICULAR GENOCIDE...?
WELL, YOU CAN'T, CAN YOU? I'M TALKIN' ABOUT IN AN IDEAL WORLD.
BUT YOU WOULD IF YOU COULD?
BLEEDIN' RIGHT I WOULD. NO ONE SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO WALK AROUND WITH WHAT THEY'VE GOT, IT'S JUST TOO MUCH OF A RISK.
AS THE OLD SAYIN' GOES: WITH GREAT POWER COMES THE TOTAL FUCKIN' CERTAINTY THAT YOU'RE GONNA TURN INTO A CUNT.

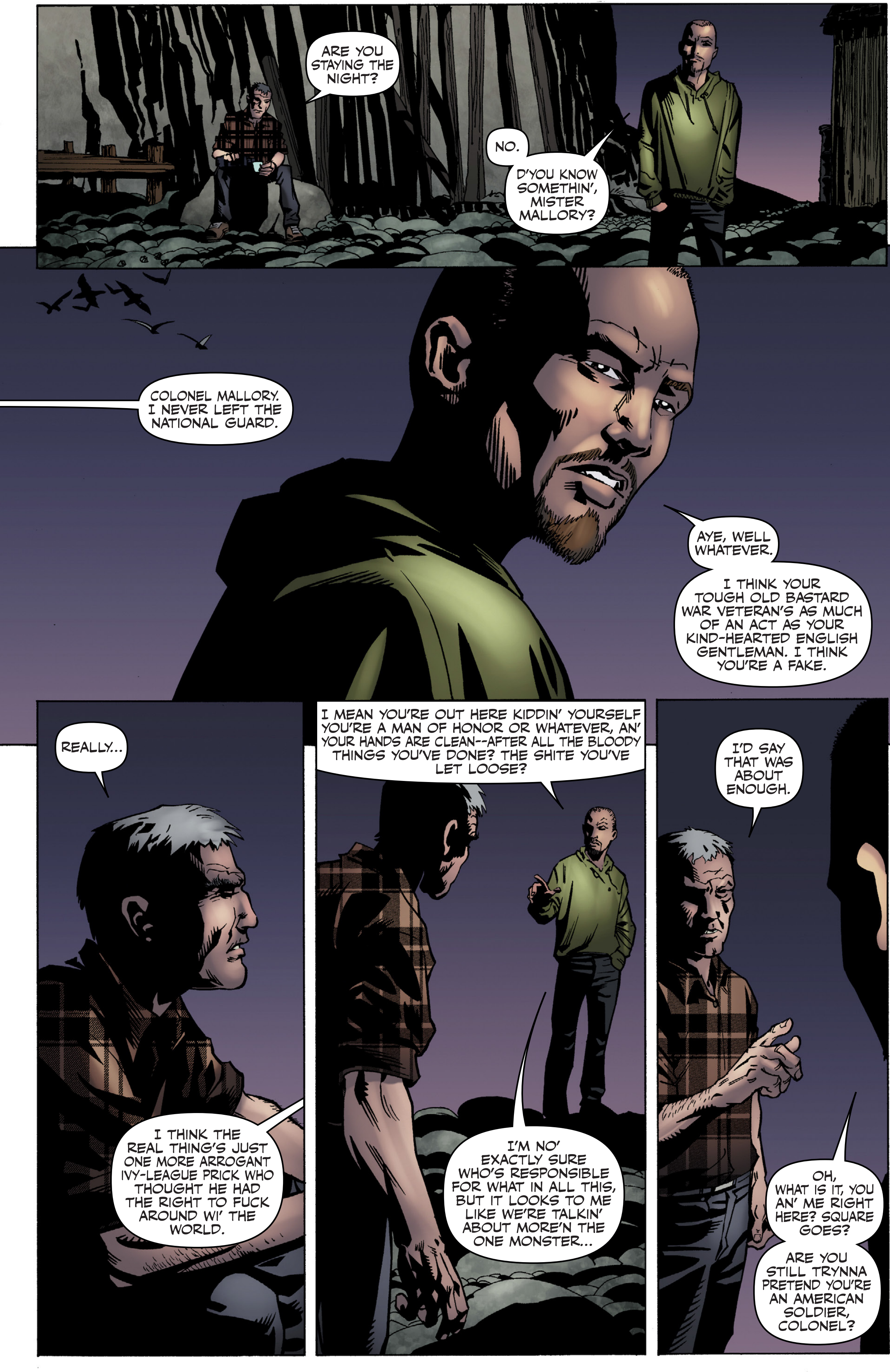

YOU THINK HE REALLY WANTS TO...
NO. HE HASN'T DIVORCED HIMSELF FROM REALITY.
I THINK HE ALREADY HAS EXACTLY WHAT HE WANTS, AND WHAT BOTHERS ME IS THAT I GAVE IT TO HIM.
I SPENT THE NEXT YEAR UNWILLING TO ADMIT IT, IF I'M HONEST. THEN CAME NINE-ELEVEN, AND EVIDENCE OF THE SEVEN'S INVOLVEMENT, AND AGAINST MY BETTER JUDGMENT I ALLOWED MYSELF TO BE...
YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED IN THAT PARTICULAR DEBACLE, DON'T YOU?
UH, SOME OF IT. I KNOW YOUR...I KNOW YOU LOST PEOPLE.
LONG STORY SHORT: MAEVE TOLD US WHAT HAPPENED ON THE DAY AND WE DECIDED TO CONFRONT THE SEVEN. THE IDEA WAS TO BLACKMAIL THE HOMELANDER INTO PUBLICLY CONFESSING TO THE FAILED ASSAULT ON THE AIRCRAFT.
WE HAD NO EVIDENCE FROM UNITED ONE SEVENTY-FIVE, BUT WE DID HAVE THE PICTURES OF HIM KILLING THE FAMILIES. YOU'VE SEEN THOSE?
NO...
COUNT YOURSELF LUCKY. THEY SHOW HIM SEXUALLY ASSAULTING AND DISMEMBERING FOUR ADULTS, TWO CHILDREN AND AN INFANT. WE NEVER DID FIND OUT WHO SENT THEM.
AFTER THE INITIAL MEETING, THE LAMPLIGHTER TAILED ME TO THE HOTEL WHERE MY DAUGHTER AND HER CHILDREN WERE STAYING. HE WAITED UNTIL I TOOK HELENA TO DINNER, THEN BROKE IN AND MURDERED THE TWO GIRLS.
DURING OUR NEXT ENCOUNTER, THE HOMELANDER WIPED OUT A DELTA FORCE UNIT THAT HAD BEEN ATTACHED TO US, REALLY JUST TO EMPHASIZE HIS ARGUMENT. A STALEMATE WAS AGREED TO. I WAS GIVEN THE LAMPLIGHTER TO SWEETEN THE DEAL.

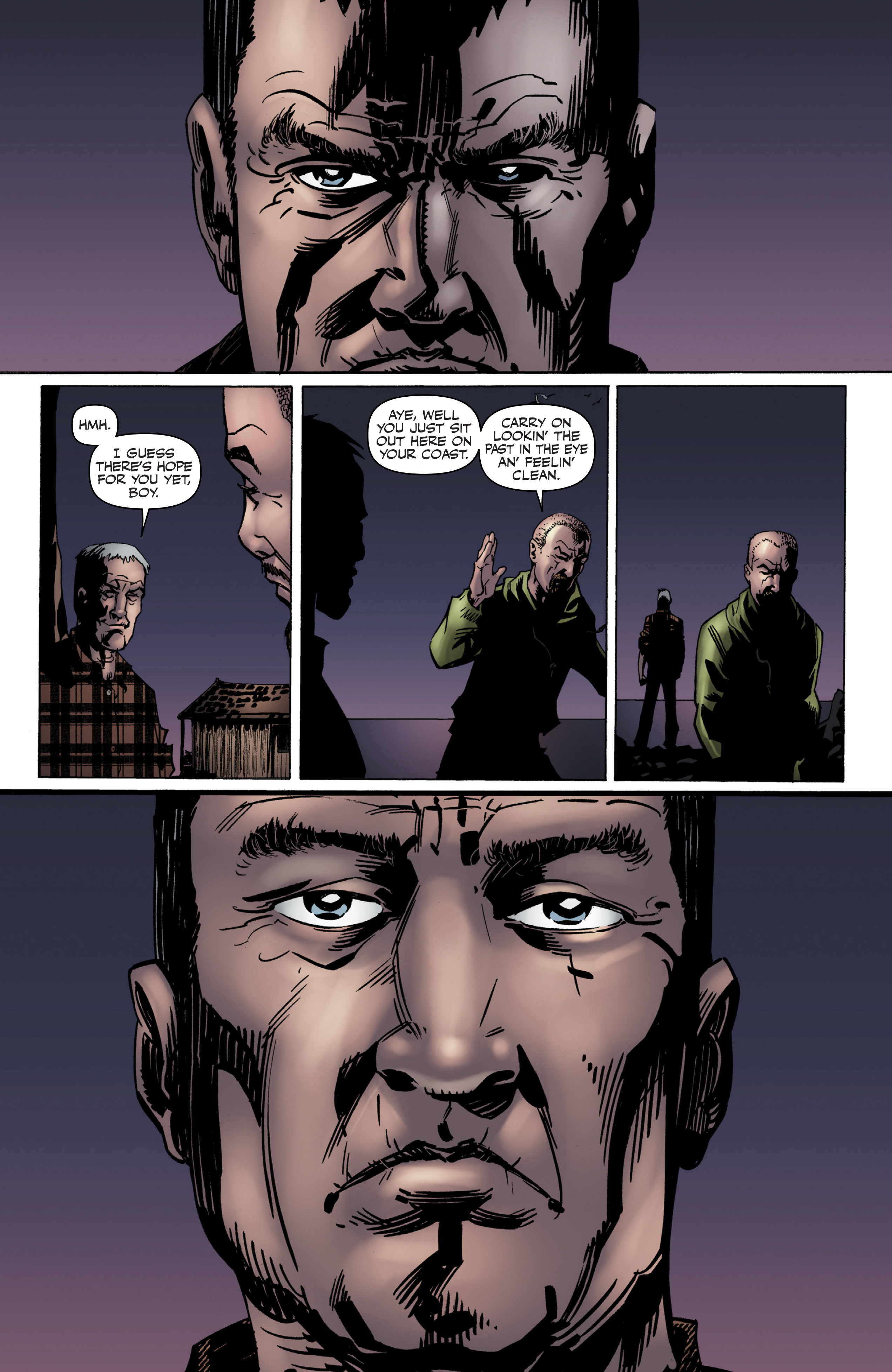

HOW, UM... HOW DID THAT GO OVER WITH...?
HE WAS LIVID. YOU CAN IMAGINE HOW HE MUST HAVE FELT, GETTING SO CLOSE TO HIS WIFE'S KILLER.
WHEN OUR FUNDING WAS PULLED AND I QUIT, HE BECAME DOWNRIGHT MURDEROUS.
"HE ASKED ME HOW HARD I'D FOUGHT FOR THE TEAM, BUT HE ALREADY KNEW THE ANSWER. HE BELIEVED I HADN'T THE COURAGE TO CONTINUE DOING WHAT WE DO, THAT I'D SIMPLY HAD IT KNOCKED OUT OF ME.
"HE WAS PARTLY RIGHT ABOUT THAT."
IN FACT, WHERE MY COURAGE REALLY FAILED ME WAS IN MY REFUSAL TO CONFRONT WHAT I'D CREATED. TO TAKE THE BIT BETWEEN MY TEETH AND DISBAND THE BOYS MYSELF.
RAYNER'S PHONE CALL WAS THE ANSWER TO MY PRAYERS.
YOU SEE, WHAT I DID...MY CRIME...WAS TO GIVE BUTCHER A WAR.
A SELF-SUSTAINING, NEVERENDING CONFLICT IN WHICH HE CAN METE OUT THE BRUTALITY AND CRUELTY THAT LIE AT HIS CORE: FOREVER. HE CAN'T KILL THEM ALL AND HE DOESN'T WANT TO.
ALL HE WANTS IS TO GO ON HURTING THE PEOPLE THAT HE BELIEVES HURT HIM.
IN THE END, THAT'S WHAT ALL MY PLANS CAME DOWN TO: EXACTLY THE THING I'D SEEN THE AGENCY DO AGAIN AND AGAIN, AND WAS DETERMINED TO AVOID.
A TEAM. A SPECIAL FORCES UNIT. ANSWERABLE TO NO ONE, JUSTIFYING ITS EXISTENCE THROUGH THE CREATION OF ITS OWN MISSIONS AND AGENDA, IMPOSSIBLE TO STOP.
COMPLETELY AND TOTALLY OUT OF CONTROL.

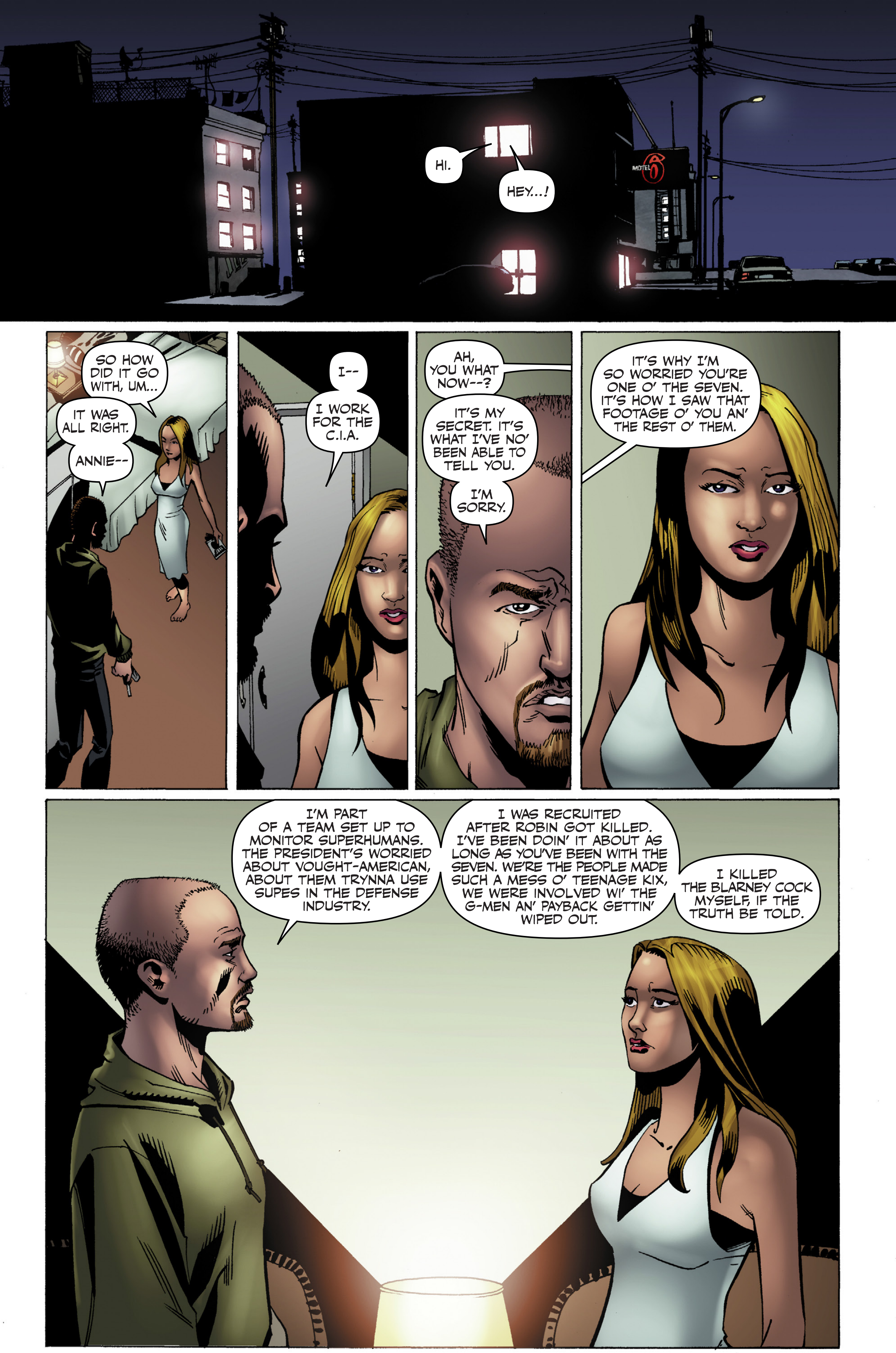

THAT'S NO' WHAT IT'S--
LET'S SEE YOU REIN THEM IN, THEN.
I--I DON'T EVEN WANT TO! I *WANT* THE FUCKIN' SUPES WATCHED, I THINK WHAT VOUGHT'S DOIN'S TERRIFYIN'!
SO DO I.
BUT I SHOULD HAVE DONE IT THE DULL, OLD-FASHIONED, UNGLAMOROUS WAY. I SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT RUSSIAN, NOT AMERICAN: FOUND A SEEDY LITTLE MAN INSIDE V.A. AND TURNED HIM INTO MY SPY.
INSTEAD I CREATED YET ANOTHER C.I.A. MONSTER, THE KIND THAT ALWAYS COME BACK AND BITE US ON THE ASS.
YOU REALLY THINK BUTCHER'S THAT...*BAD?*
I'M CERTAIN OF IT.
"THERE WAS A LOOSE END I'D NEVER BEEN COMFORTABLE WITH, AND THAT WAS VOGELBAUM HIMSELF. THE THOUGHT OF CIRCUMSTANCES TAKING HIM BEYOND MY CONTROL, MAYBE MY JUST NOT BEING AROUND TO KEEP AN EYE ON HIM, WAS A CONSTANT WORRY.
"IF VOUGHT GOT WIND HE WAS STILL ALIVE...OR EVEN IF SOMEONE ON OUR SIDE DID, AND HAD THE BRIGHT IDEA TO MAKE OUR OWN SUPES--AN OLD CHESTNUT, BUT ALWAYS WORTH CONSIDERING...
"NOT LONG AFTER WE FORMED THE TEAM I DECIDED IT WASN'T WORTH THE RISK. WE HAD OUR SUPPLY OF V, WE DIDN'T EVEN NEED VOGELBAUM. BUT--"

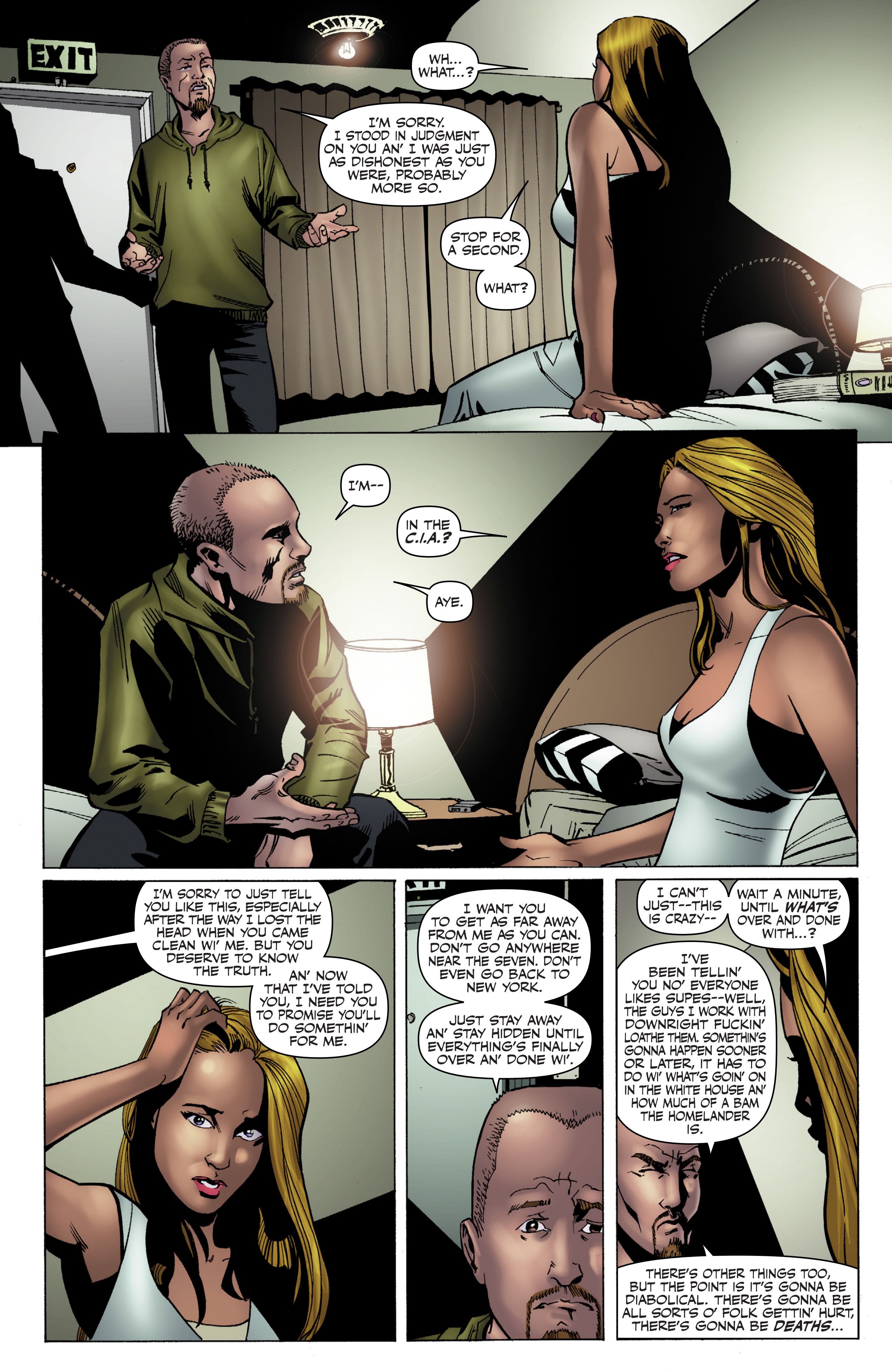

I STILL DIDN'T QUITE HAVE IT IN ME...SO I SENT BUTCHER INSTEAD.
SENT HIM TO WHAT?
INVITE THE OLD GUY OVER FOR DINNER. MAYBE SING SOME SONGS.
TO DO WHAT YOU SEND BUTCHER TO DO, HUGHIE.
HE WAS DELIGHTED. JUST TO GET HIS HANDS ON THE MAN WHO STARTED IT ALL, WHO INVENTED COMPOUND V--WHO "SHAT THEM OUT IN THE FUCKING FIRST PLACE," HE SAID--
WELL, YOU'VE SEEN HIM SMILE THAT SMILE.
RIGHT THEN.
WHAT'S...?

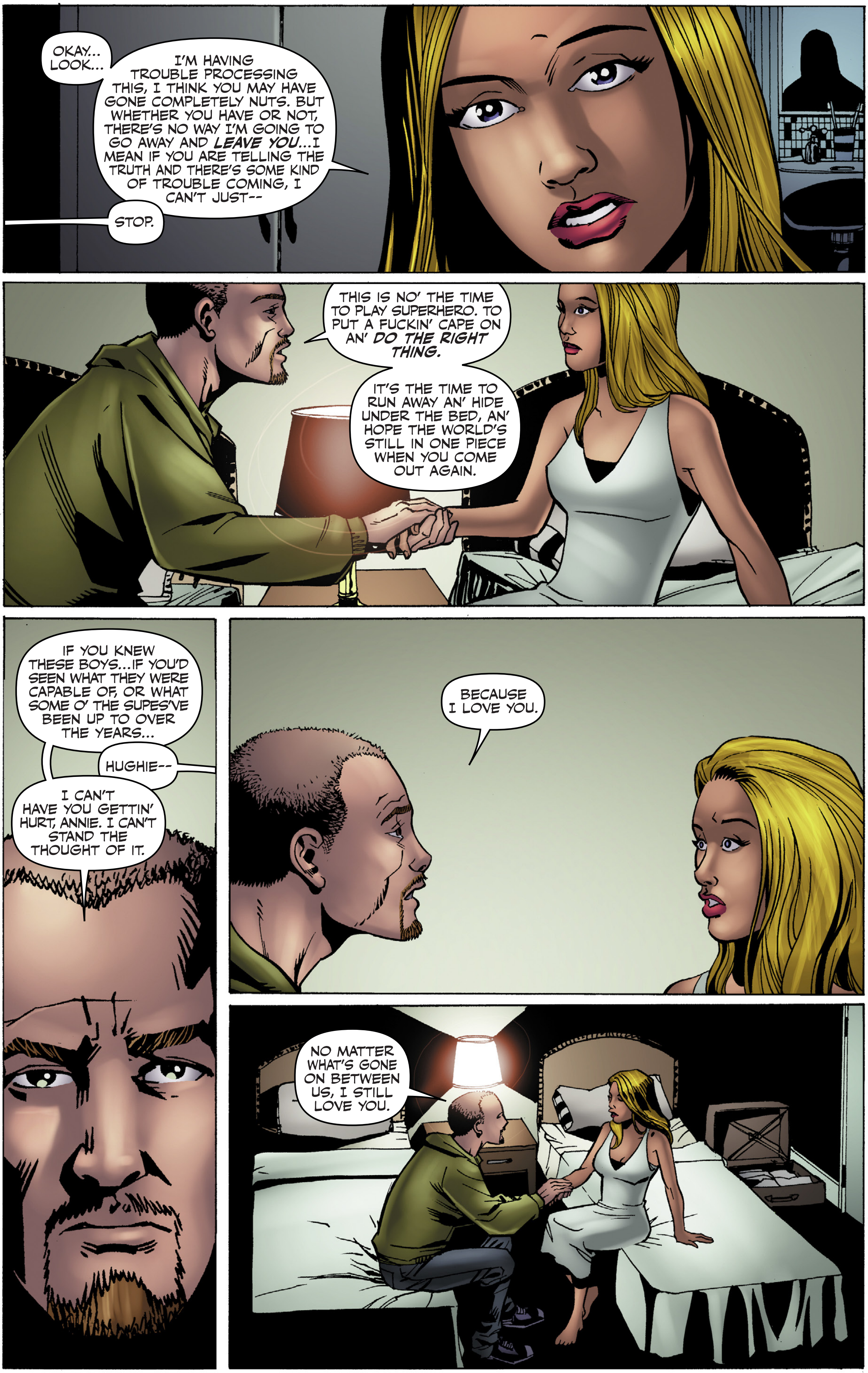

I'M FUCKIN' STARVIN', D'YOU MIND IF WE STOP FOR A BITE TO EAT?
NO *WAY*...!
THERE IS NO ONE ON EARTH WHO HATES LIKE THAT MAN DOES.
GOD HELP THE HOMELANDER, IF HE EVER REALLY HAS HIM AT HIS MERCY.
SO YES, I THINK HE'S THAT BAD. I THINK HE LOVES EVERY MINUTE OF IT AND HE SEES NO REASON TO STOP.
BURNHAM ONCE COMPARED WHAT WE DO TO THE COLD WAR, BUT ***THAT*** RELIED ON NEITHER SIDE EVER GOING TOO FAR. THERE WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE SOME FINAL SHOWDOWN IN THE RUINS OF THE KREMLIN, NO ***LET US JUST TAKE OUT REAGAN, JUST HIM...***
THE BOYS AGAINST THE SEVEN...AND BY EXTENSION THE C.I.A. AGAINST VOUGHT-AMERICAN...
THAT'S GOING SOMEWHERE ELSE ENTIRELY.
WHICH IS WHY I WASHED MY HANDS OF THE WHOLE THING, AND CAME OUT HERE.
OH AYE?

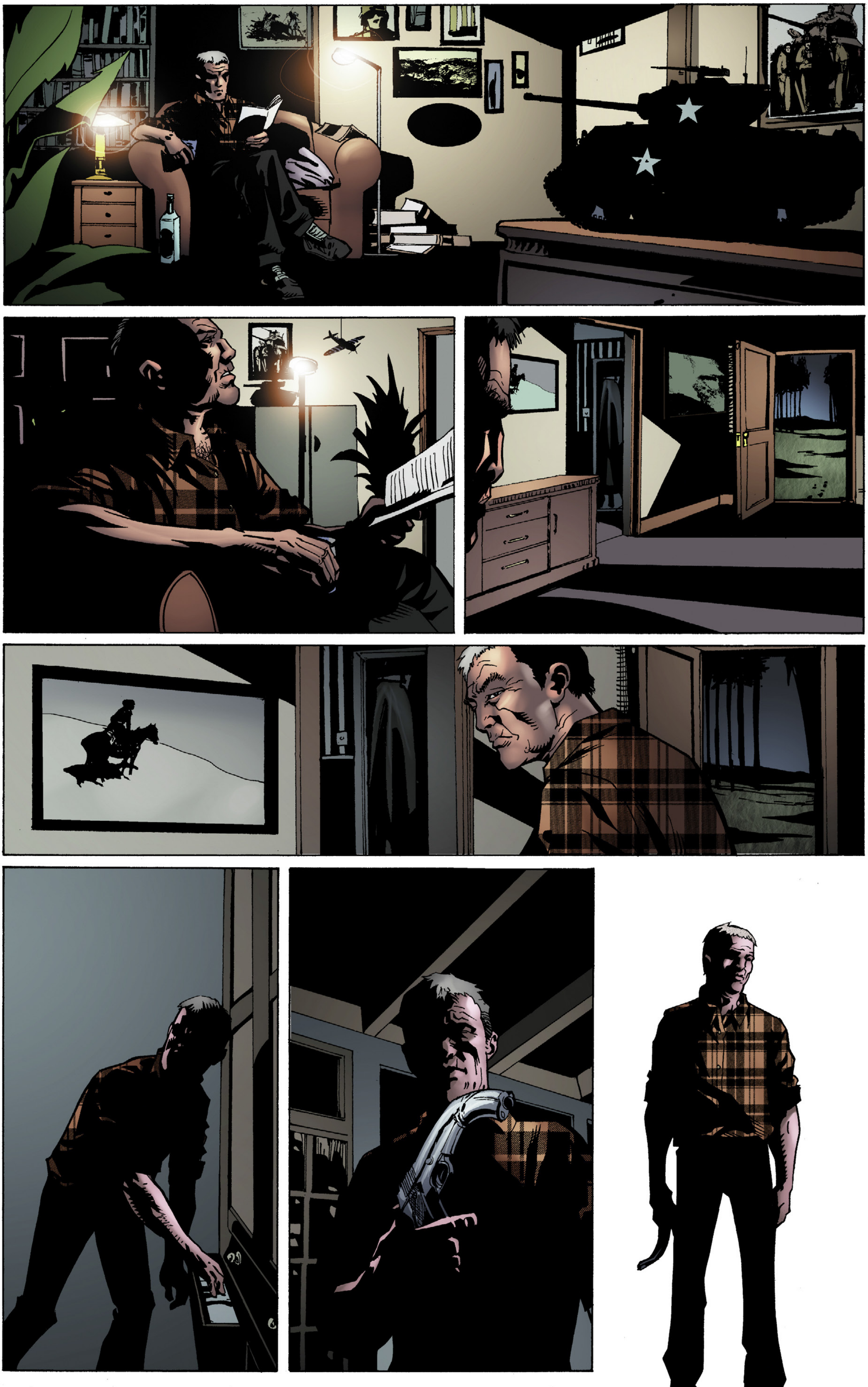

ARE YOU STAYING THE NIGHT?
NO.
D'YOU KNOW SOMETHIN', MISTER MALLORY?
COLONEL MALLORY. I NEVER LEFT THE NATIONAL GUARD.
AYE, WELL WHATEVER.
I THINK YOUR TOUGH OLD BASTARD WAR VETERAN'S AS MUCH OF AN ACT AS YOUR KIND-HEARTED ENGLISH GENTLEMAN. I THINK YOU'RE A FAKE.
REALLY...
I THINK THE REAL THING'S JUST ONE MORE ARROGANT IVY-LEAGUE PRICK WHO THOUGHT HE HAD THE RIGHT TO FUCK AROUND WI' THE WORLD.
I MEAN YOU'RE OUT HERE KIDDIN' YOURSELF YOU'RE A MAN OF HONOR OR WHATEVER, AN' YOUR HANDS ARE CLEAN--AFTER ALL THE BLOODY THINGS YOU'VE DONE? THE SHITE YOU'VE LET LOOSE?
I'M NO' EXACTLY SURE WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT IN ALL THIS, BUT IT LOOKS TO ME LIKE WE'RE TALKIN' ABOUT MORE'N THE ONE MONSTER...
I'D SAY THAT WAS ABOUT ENOUGH.
OH, WHAT IS IT, YOU AN' ME RIGHT HERE? SQUARE GOES?
ARE YOU STILL TRYNNA PRETEND YOU'RE AN AMERICAN SOLDIER, COLONEL?

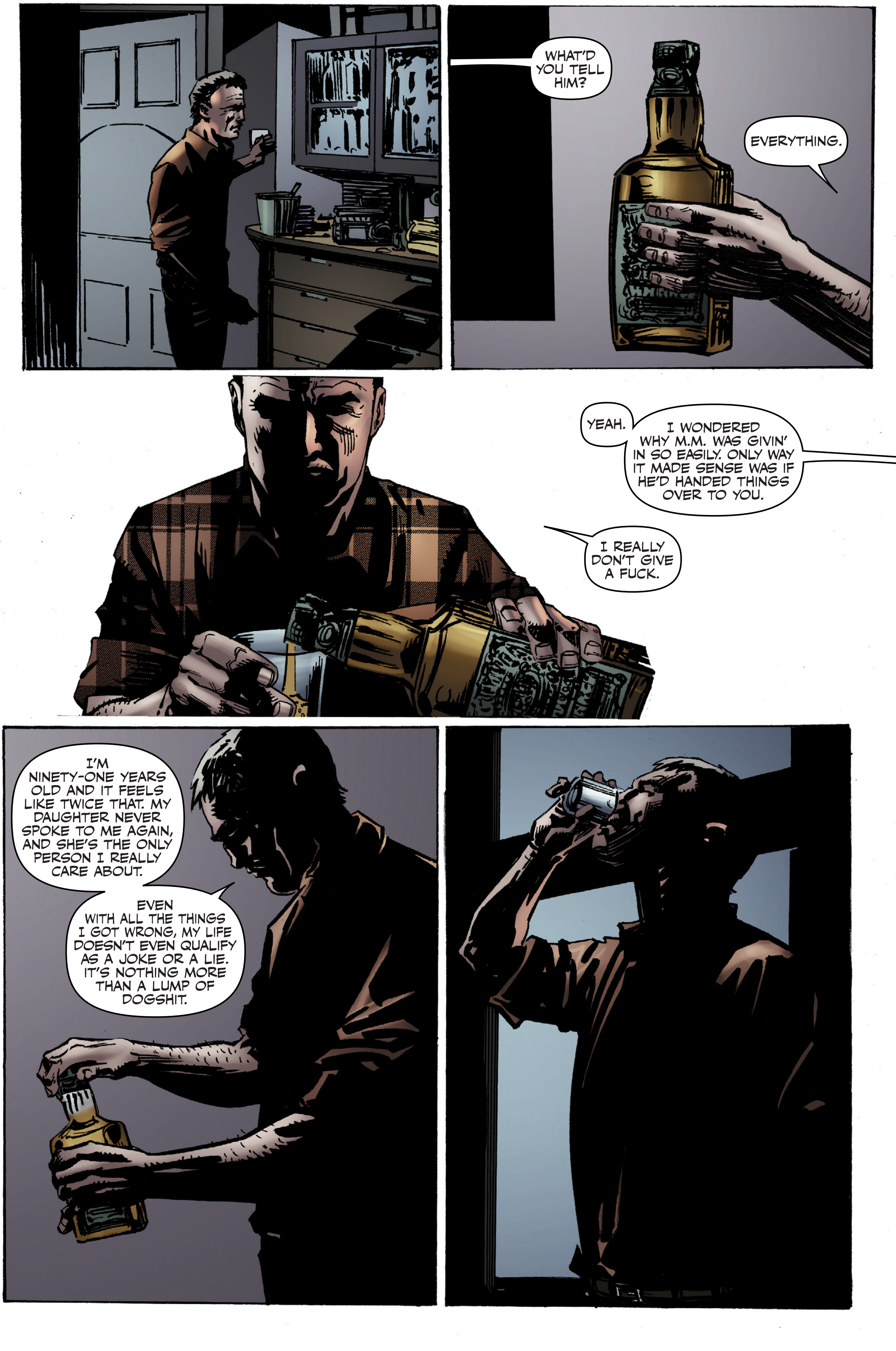

HMH.
I GUESS THERE'S HOPE FOR YOU YET, BOY.
AYE, WELL YOU JUST SIT OUT HERE ON YOUR COAST.
CARRY ON LOOKIN' THE PAST IN THE EYE AN' FEELIN' CLEAN.

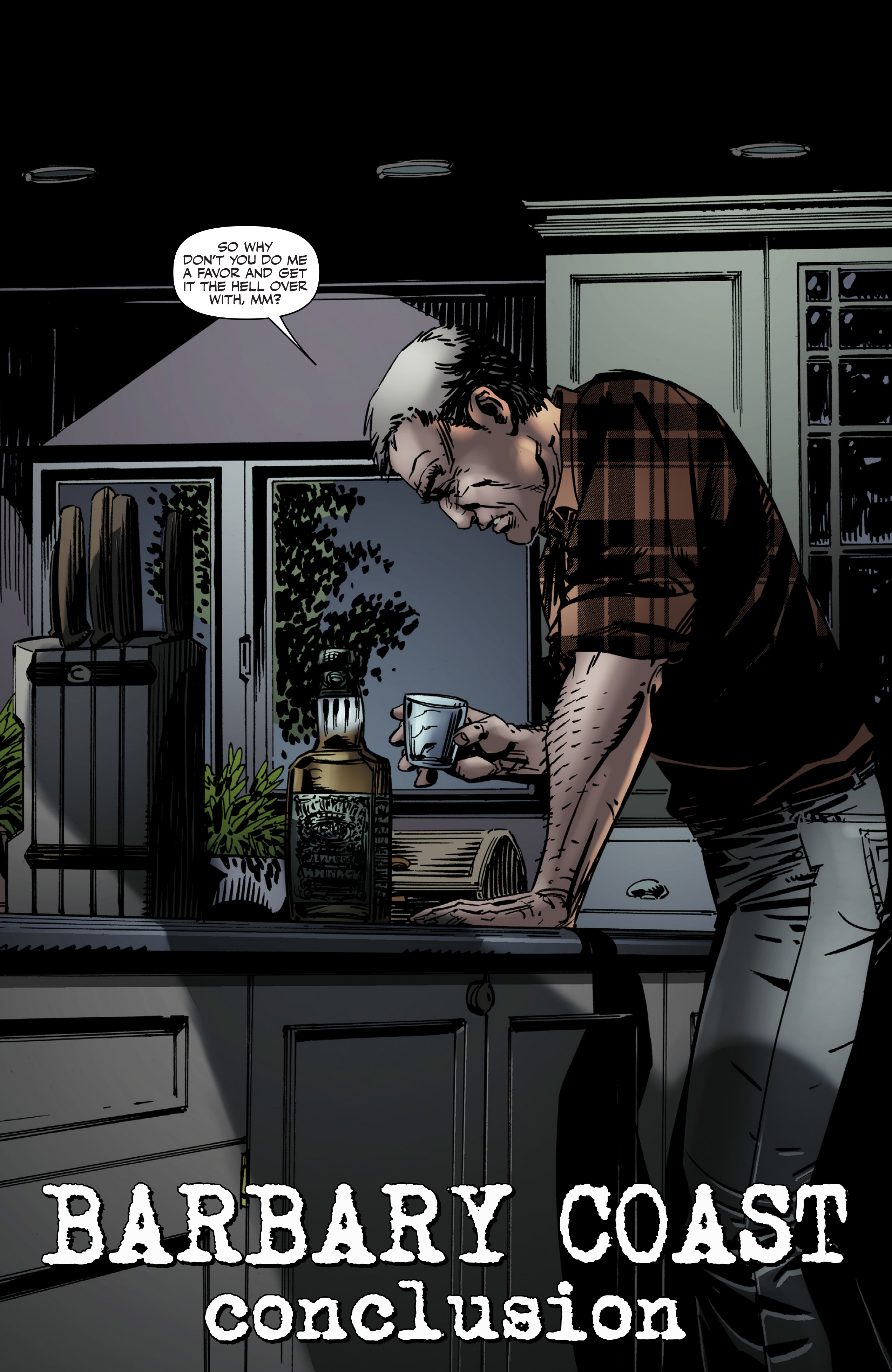

MOTEL
HI.
HEY...!
SO HOW DID IT GO WITH, UM...
IT WAS ALL RIGHT.
ANNIE--
I--
I WORK FOR THE C.I.A.
AH, YOU WHAT NOW--?
IT'S MY SECRET. IT'S WHAT I'VE NO' BEEN ABLE TO TELL YOU.
I'M SORRY.
IT'S WHY I'M SO WORRIED YOU'RE ONE O' THE SEVEN. IT'S HOW I SAW THAT FOOTAGE O' YOU AN' THE REST O' THEM.
I'M PART OF A TEAM SET UP TO MONITOR SUPERHUMANS. THE PRESIDENT'S WORRIED ABOUT VOUGHT-AMERICAN, ABOUT THEM TRYNNA USE SUPES IN THE DEFENSE INDUSTRY.
I WAS RECRUITED AFTER ROBIN GOT KILLED. I'VE BEEN DOIN' IT ABOUT AS LONG AS YOU'VE BEEN WITH THE SEVEN. WE'RE THE PEOPLE MADE SUCH A MESS O' TEENAGE KIX, WE WERE INVOLVED WI' THE G-MEN AN' PAYBACK GETTIN' WIPED OUT.
I KILLED THE BLARNEY COCK MYSELF, IF THE TRUTH BE TOLD.


EXIT
WH... WHAT...?
I'M SORRY. I STOOD IN JUDGMENT ON YOU AN' I WAS JUST AS DISHONEST AS YOU WERE, PROBABLY MORE SO.
STOP FOR A SECOND.
WHAT?
I'M--
IN THE *C.I.A.?*
AYE.
I'M SORRY TO JUST TELL YOU LIKE THIS, ESPECIALLY AFTER THE WAY I LOST THE HEAD WHEN YOU CAME CLEAN WI' ME. BUT YOU DESERVE TO KNOW THE TRUTH.
AN' NOW THAT I'VE TOLD YOU, I NEED YOU TO PROMISE YOU'LL DO SOMETHIN' FOR ME.
I WANT YOU TO GET AS FAR AWAY FROM ME AS YOU CAN. DON'T GO ANYWHERE NEAR THE SEVEN. DON'T EVEN GO BACK TO NEW YORK.
JUST STAY AWAY AN' STAY HIDDEN UNTIL EVERYTHING'S FINALLY OVER AN' DONE WI'.
I CAN'T JUST--THIS IS CRAZY--
WAIT A MINUTE, UNTIL *WHAT'S* OVER AND DONE WITH...?
I'VE BEEN TELLIN' YOU NO' EVERYONE LIKES SUPES--WELL, THE GUYS I WORK WITH DOWNRIGHT FUCKIN' LOATHE THEM. SOMETHIN'S GONNA HAPPEN SOONER OR LATER, IT HAS TO DO WI' WHAT'S GOIN' ON IN THE WHITE HOUSE AN' HOW MUCH OF A BAM THE HOMELANDER IS.
THERE'S OTHER THINGS TOO, BUT THE POINT IS IT'S GONNA BE DIABOLICAL. THERE'S GONNA BE ALL SORTS O' FOLK GETTIN' HURT, THERE'S GONNA BE *DEATHS*...


OKAY... LOOK...
I'M HAVING TROUBLE PROCESSING THIS, I THINK YOU MAY HAVE GONE COMPLETELY NUTS. BUT WHETHER YOU HAVE OR NOT, THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING TO GO AWAY AND ***LEAVE YOU***...I MEAN IF YOU ARE TELLING THE TRUTH AND THERE'S SOME KIND OF TROUBLE COMING, I CAN'T JUST--
STOP.
THIS IS NO' THE TIME TO PLAY SUPERHERO. TO PUT A FUCKIN' CAPE ON AN' ***DO THE RIGHT THING.***
IT'S THE TIME TO RUN AWAY AN' HIDE UNDER THE BED, AN' HOPE THE WORLD'S STILL IN ONE PIECE WHEN YOU COME OUT AGAIN.
IF YOU KNEW THESE BOYS...IF YOU'D SEEN WHAT THEY WERE CAPABLE OF, OR WHAT SOME O' THE SUPES'VE BEEN UP TO OVER THE YEARS...
HUGHIE--
I CAN'T HAVE YOU GETTIN' HURT, ANNIE. I CAN'T STAND THE THOUGHT OF IT.
BECAUSE I LOVE YOU.
NO MATTER WHAT'S GONE ON BETWEEN US, I STILL LOVE YOU.




WHAT'D YOU TELL HIM?
EVERYTHING.
YEAH.
I WONDERED WHY M.M. WAS GIVIN' IN SO EASILY. ONLY WAY IT MADE SENSE WAS IF HE'D HANDED THINGS OVER TO YOU.
I REALLY DON'T GIVE A FUCK.
I'M NINETY-ONE YEARS OLD AND IT FEELS LIKE TWICE THAT. MY DAUGHTER NEVER SPOKE TO ME AGAIN, AND SHE'S THE ONLY PERSON I REALLY CARE ABOUT.
EVEN WITH ALL THE THINGS I GOT WRONG, MY LIFE DOESN'T EVEN QUALIFY AS A JOKE OR A LIE. IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN A LUMP OF DOGSHIT.


SO WHY DON'T YOU DO ME A FAVOR AND GET IT THE HELL OVER WITH, MM?

BARBARY COAST
conclusion

FIFTY-SIX
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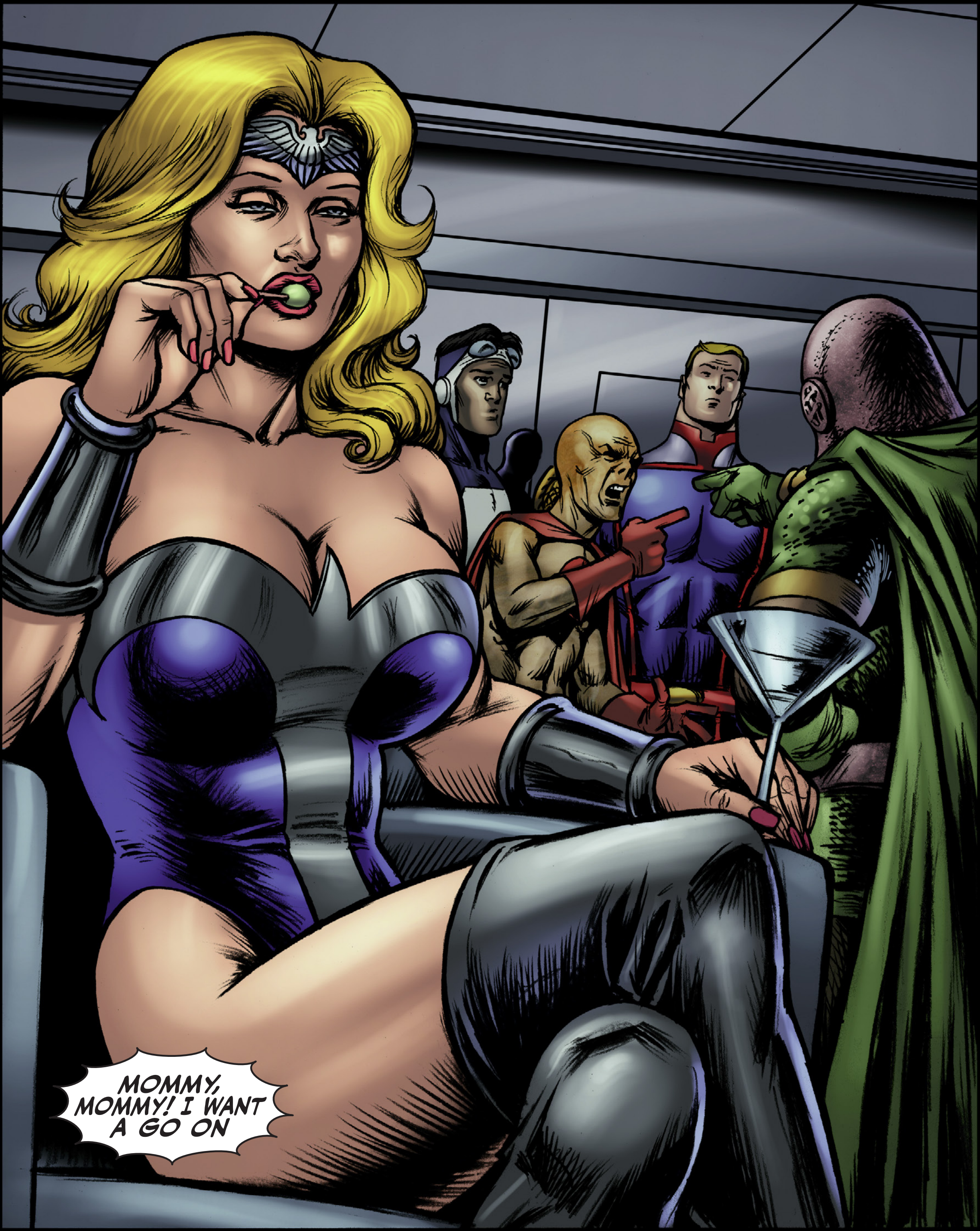
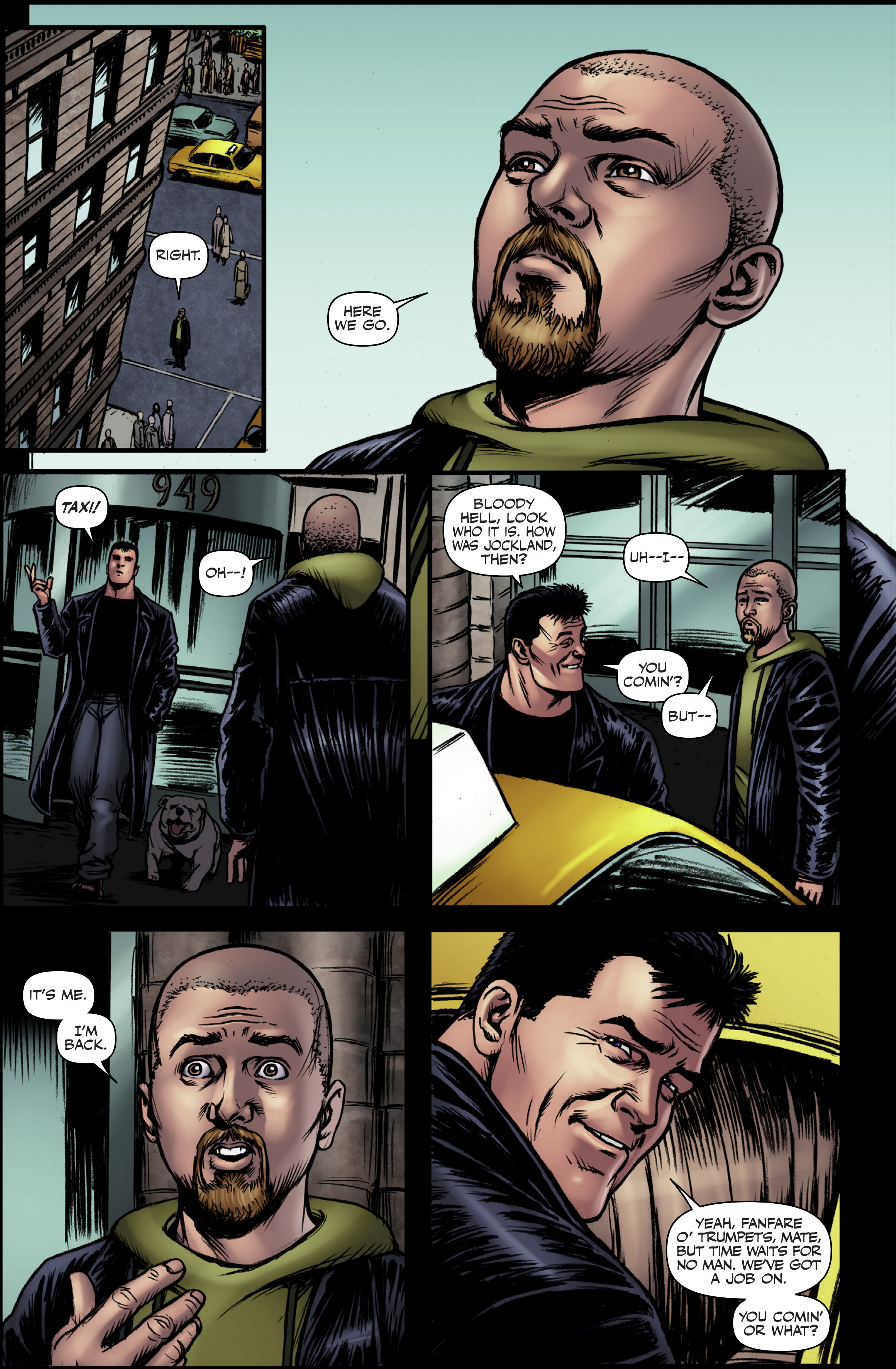
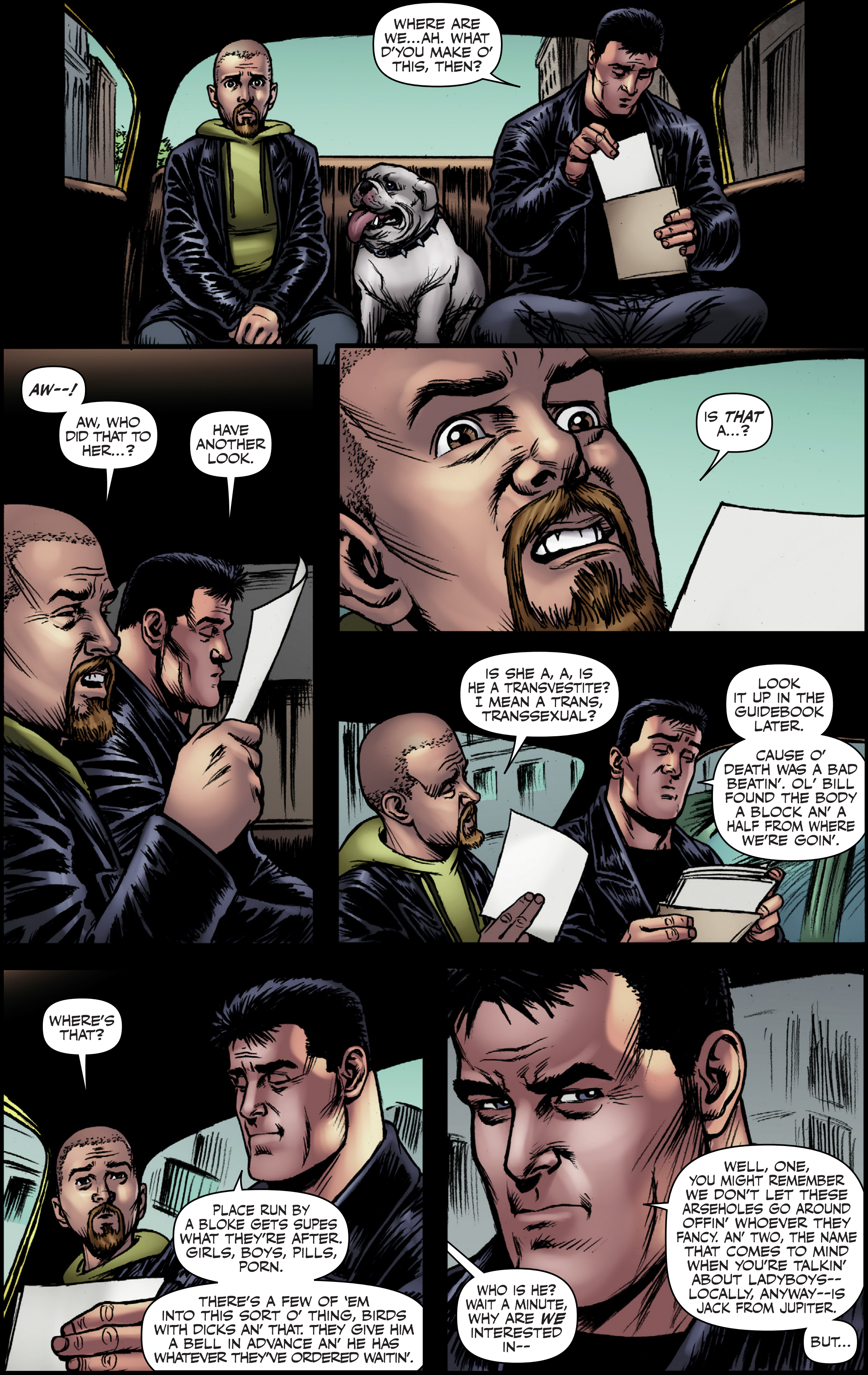
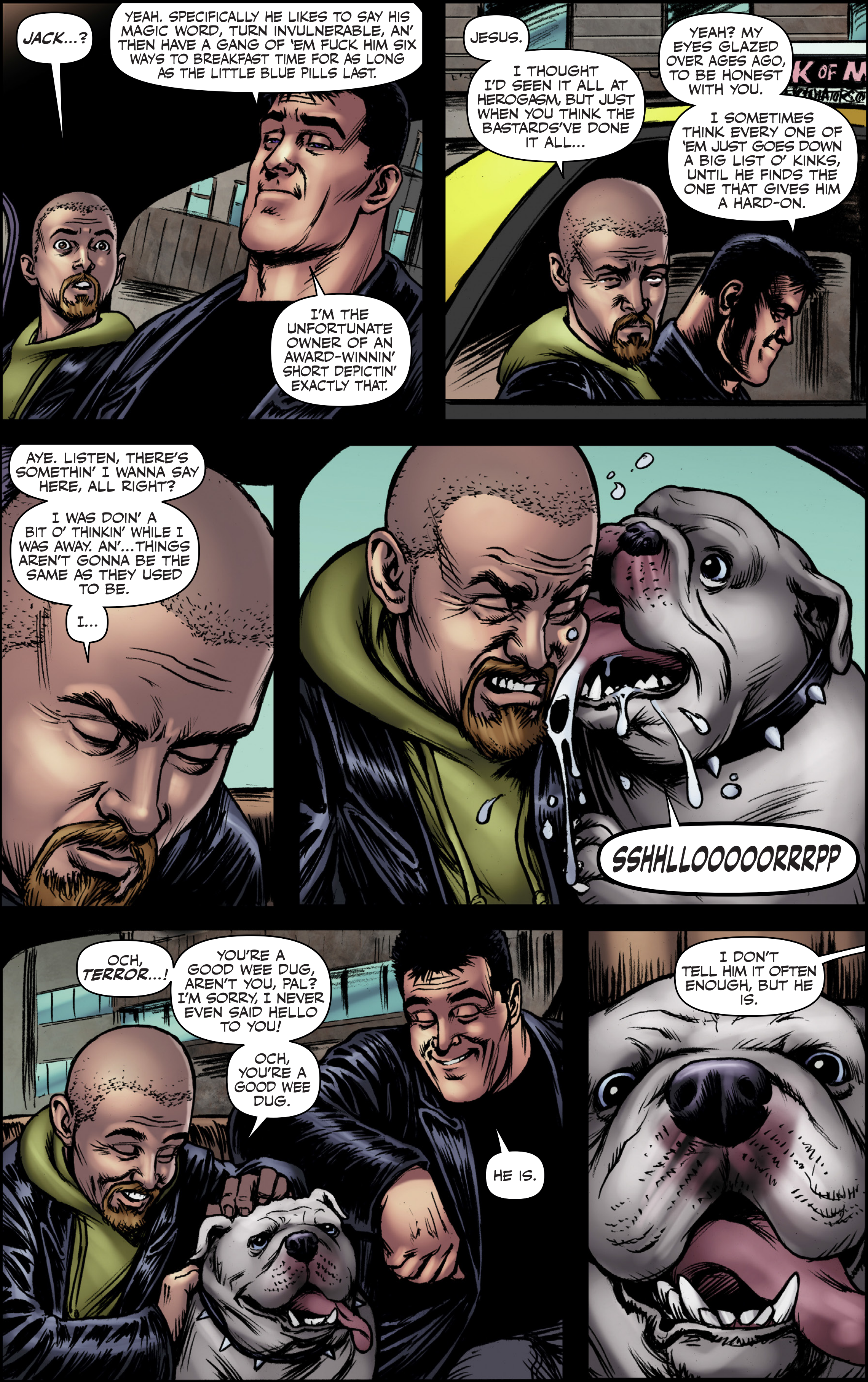

MOMMY, MOMMY! I WANT A GO ON

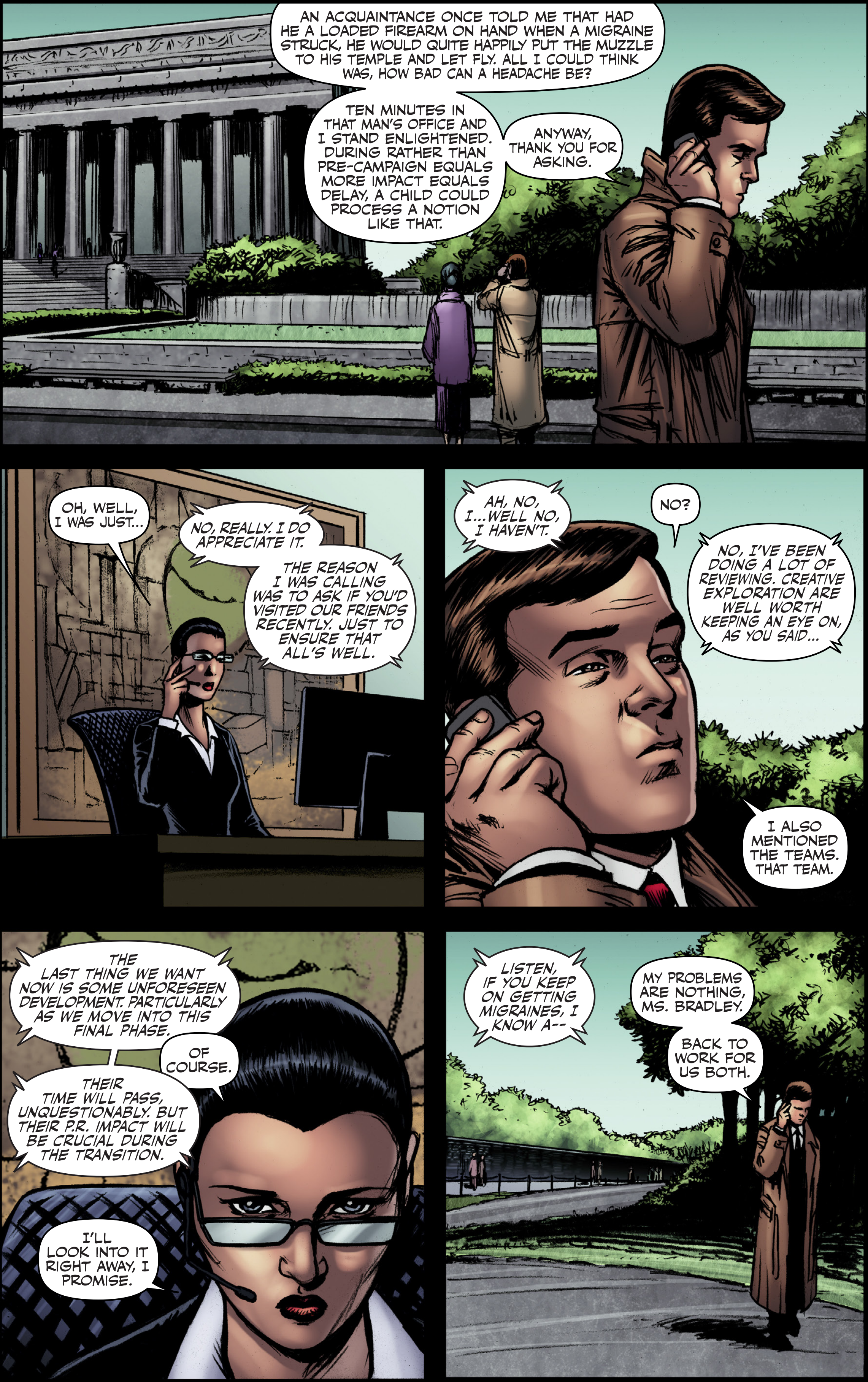
THE BIG RIDE

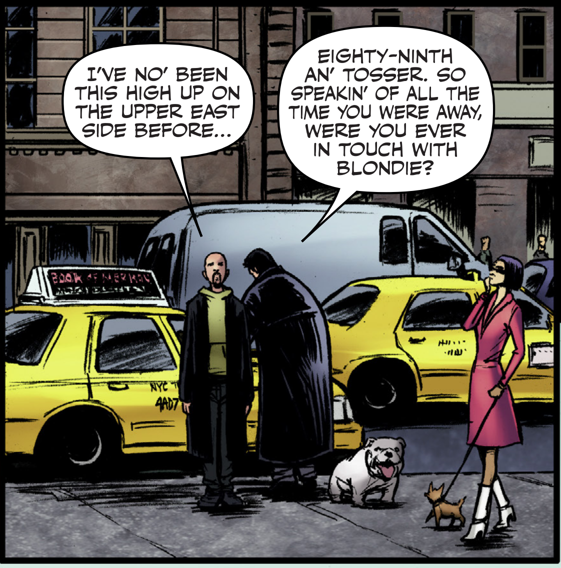
part one

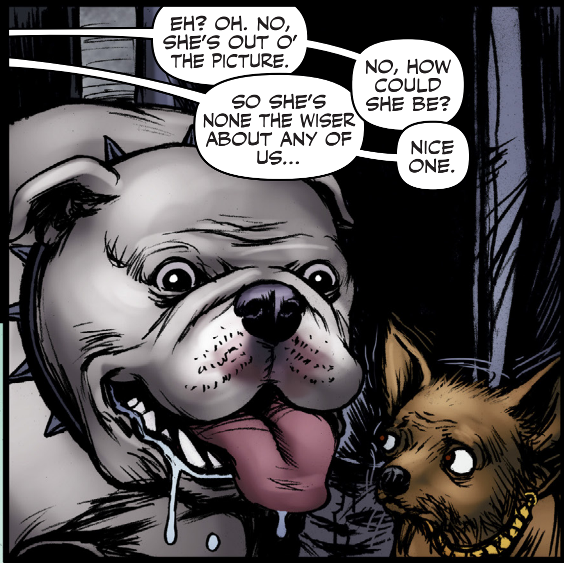

RIGHT.
HERE WE GO.
949
TAXI!
OH--!
BLOODY HELL, LOOK WHO IT IS. HOW WAS JOCKLAND, THEN?
UH--I--
YOU COMIN'?
BUT--
IT'S ME.
I'M BACK.
YEAH, FANFARE O' TRUMPETS, MATE, BUT TIME WAITS FOR NO MAN. WE'VE GOT A JOB ON.
YOU COMIN' OR WHAT?

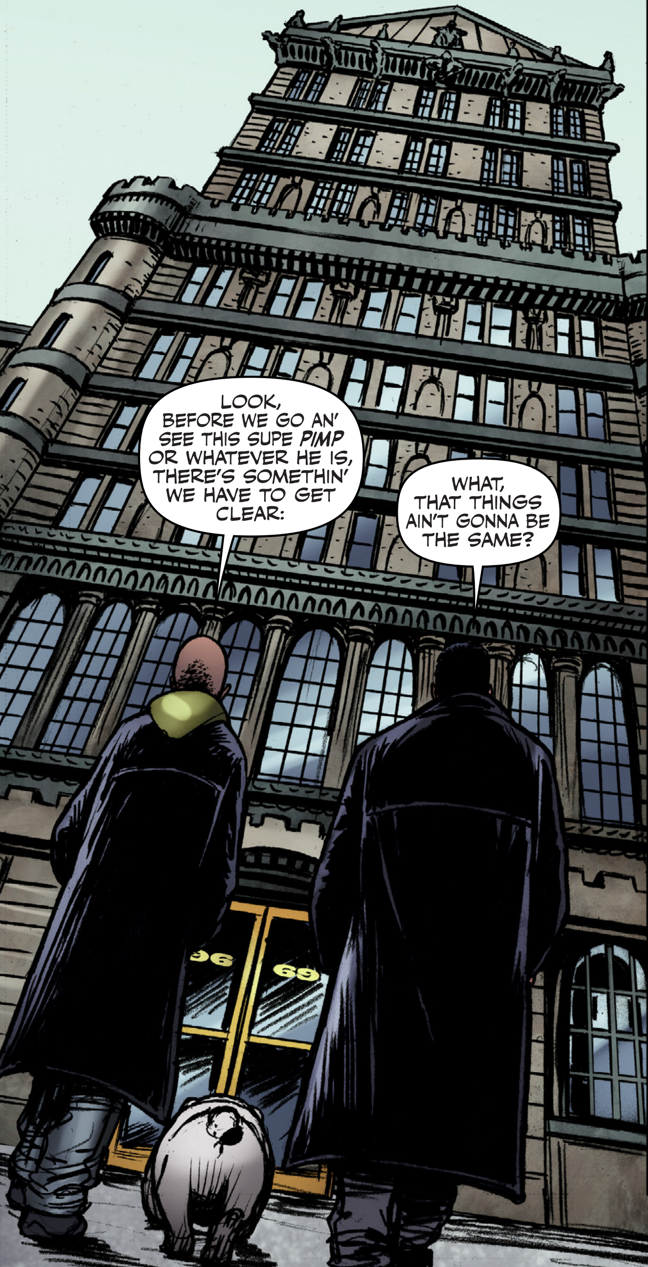

WHERE ARE WE...AH. WHAT D'YOU MAKE O' THIS, THEN?
AW--!
AW, WHO DID THAT TO HER...?
HAVE ANOTHER LOOK.
IS *THAT* A...?
IS SHE A, A, IS HE A TRANSVESTITE? I MEAN A TRANS, TRANSSEXUAL?
LOOK IT UP IN THE GUIDEBOOK LATER.
CAUSE O' DEATH WAS A BAD BEATIN'. OL' BILL FOUND THE BODY A BLOCK AN' A HALF FROM WHERE WE'RE GOIN'.
WHERE'S THAT?
PLACE RUN BY A BLOKE GETS SUPES WHAT THEY'RE AFTER. GIRLS, BOYS, PILLS, PORN.
THERE'S A FEW OF 'EM INTO THIS SORT O' THING, BIRDS WITH DICKS AN' THAT. THEY GIVE HIM A BELL IN ADVANCE AN' HE HAS WHATEVER THEY'VE ORDERED WAITIN'.
WHO IS HE? WAIT A MINUTE, WHY ARE *WE* INTERESTED IN--
WELL, ONE, YOU MIGHT REMEMBER WE DON'T LET THESE ARSEHOLES GO AROUND OFFIN' WHOEVER THEY FANCY. AN' TWO, THE NAME THAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU'RE TALKIN' ABOUT LADYBOYS--LOCALLY, ANYWAY--IS JACK FROM JUPITER.
BUT...

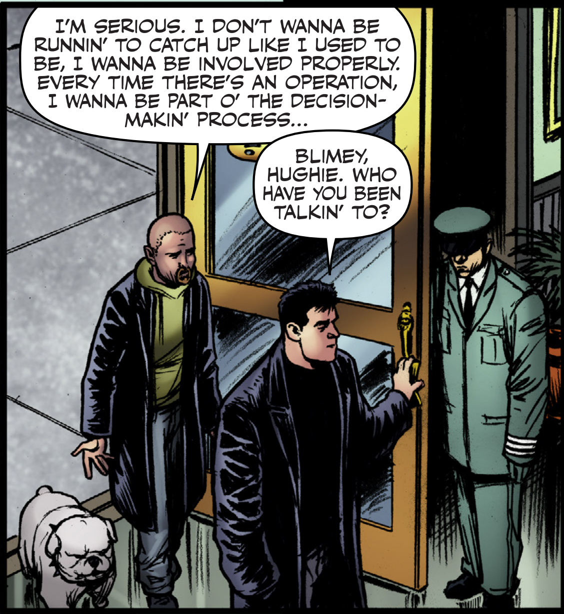

JACK...?
YEAH. SPECIFICALLY HE LIKES TO SAY HIS MAGIC WORD, TURN INVULNERABLE, AN' THEN HAVE A GANG OF 'EM FUCK HIM SIX WAYS TO BREAKFAST TIME FOR AS LONG AS THE LITTLE BLUE PILLS LAST.
I'M THE UNFORTUNATE OWNER OF AN AWARD-WINNIN' SHORT DEPICTIN' EXACTLY THAT.
JESUS.
I THOUGHT I'D SEEN IT ALL AT HEROGASM, BUT JUST WHEN YOU THINK THE BASTARDS'VE DONE IT ALL...
YEAH? MY EYES GLAZED OVER AGES AGO, TO BE HONEST WITH YOU.
I SOMETIMES THINK EVERY ONE OF 'EM JUST GOES DOWN A BIG LIST O' KINKS, UNTIL HE FINDS THE ONE THAT GIVES HIM A HARD-ON.
AYE. LISTEN, THERE'S SOMETHIN' I WANNA SAY HERE, ALL RIGHT?
I WAS DOIN' A BIT O' THINKIN' WHILE I WAS AWAY. AN'...THINGS AREN'T GONNA BE THE SAME AS THEY USED TO BE.
I...
SSHHLLOOOOORRRPP
OCH, TERROR...!
YOU'RE A GOOD WEE DUG, AREN'T YOU, PAL? I'M SORRY, I NEVER EVEN SAID HELLO TO YOU!
OCH, YOU'RE A GOOD WEE DUG.
HE IS.
I DON'T TELL HIM IT OFTEN ENOUGH, BUT HE IS.

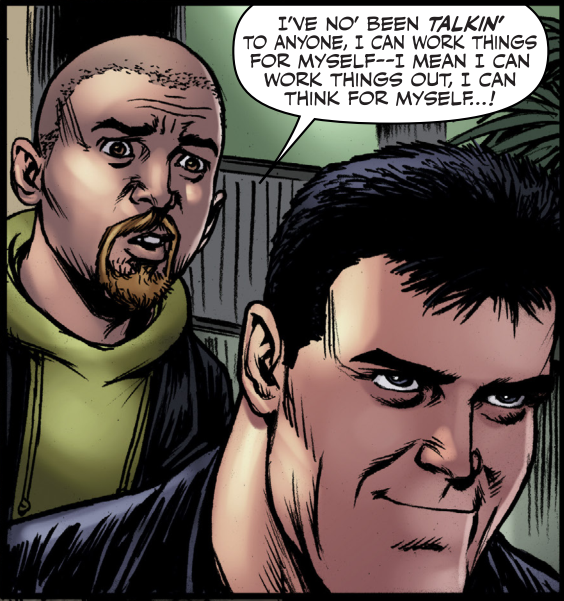

AN ACQUAINTANCE ONCE TOLD ME THAT HAD HE A LOADED FIREARM ON HAND WHEN A MIGRAINE STRUCK, HE WOULD QUITE HAPPILY PUT THE MUZZLE TO HIS TEMPLE AND LET FLY. ALL I COULD THINK WAS, HOW BAD CAN A HEADACHE BE?
TEN MINUTES IN THAT MAN'S OFFICE AND I STAND ENLIGHTENED. DURING RATHER THAN PRE-CAMPAIGN EQUALS MORE IMPACT EQUALS DELAY, A CHILD COULD PROCESS A NOTION LIKE THAT.
ANYWAY, THANK YOU FOR ASKING.
OH, WELL, I WAS JUST...
NO, REALLY. I DO APPRECIATE IT.
THE REASON I WAS CALLING WAS TO ASK IF YOU'D VISITED OUR FRIENDS RECENTLY. JUST TO ENSURE THAT ALL'S WELL.
AH, NO, I...WELL NO, I HAVEN'T.
NO?
NO, I'VE BEEN DOING A LOT OF REVIEWING. CREATIVE EXPLORATION ARE WELL WORTH KEEPING AN EYE ON, AS YOU SAID...
I ALSO MENTIONED THE TEAMS. THAT TEAM.
THE LAST THING WE WANT NOW IS SOME UNFORESEEN DEVELOPMENT. PARTICULARLY AS WE MOVE INTO THIS FINAL PHASE.
OF COURSE.
THEIR TIME WILL PASS, UNQUESTIONABLY. BUT THEIR P.R. IMPACT WILL BE CRUCIAL DURING THE TRANSITION.
I'LL LOOK INTO IT RIGHT AWAY, I PROMISE.
LISTEN, IF YOU KEEP ON GETTING MIGRAINES, I KNOW A--
MY PROBLEMS ARE NOTHING, MS. BRADLEY.
BACK TO WORK FOR US BOTH.

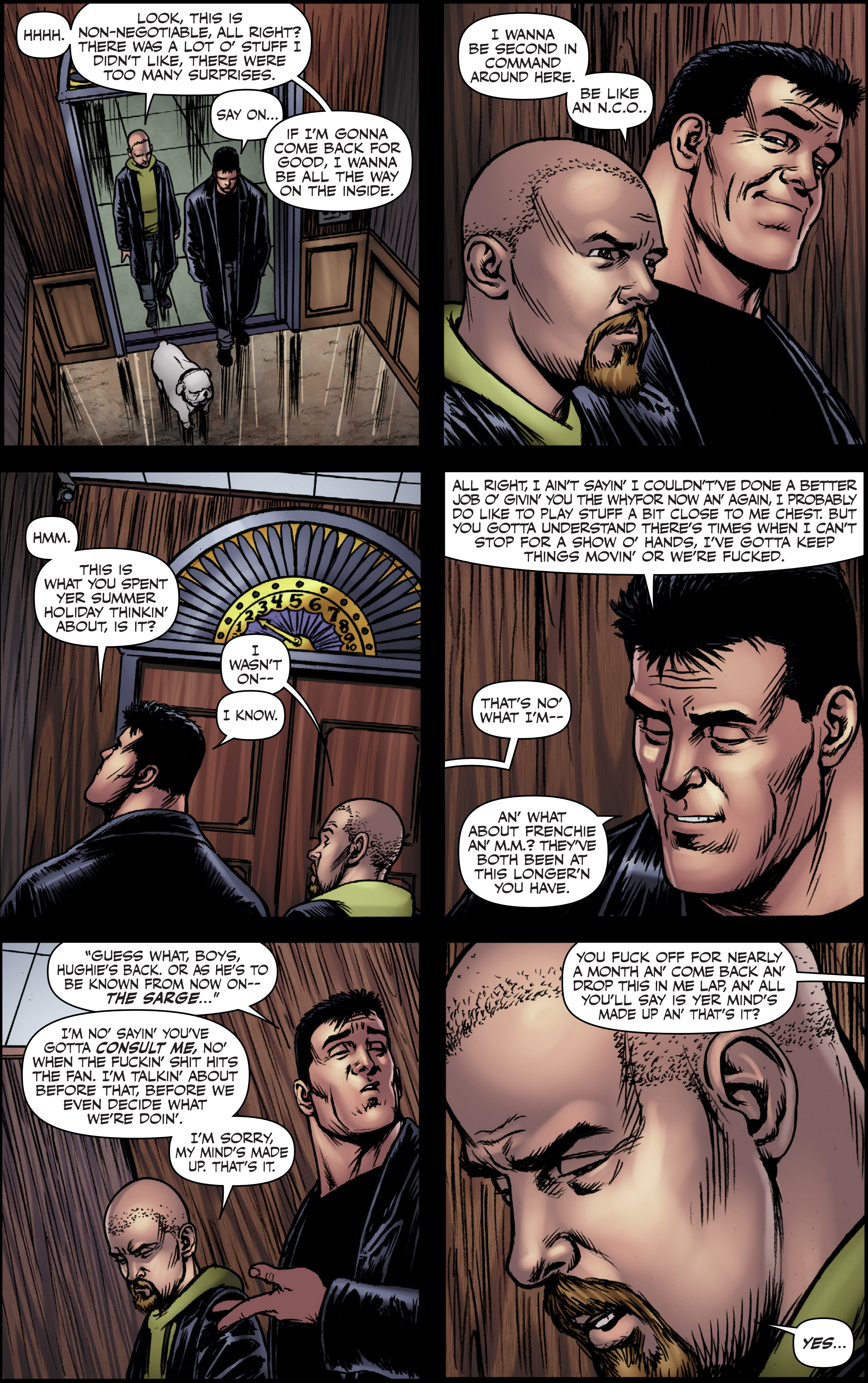

I'VE NO' BEEN THIS HIGH UP ON THE UPPER EAST SIDE BEFORE...
EIGHTY-NINTH AN' TOSSER. SO SPEAKIN' OF ALL THE TIME YOU WERE AWAY, WERE YOU EVER IN TOUCH WITH BLONDIE?
NYC
4A07

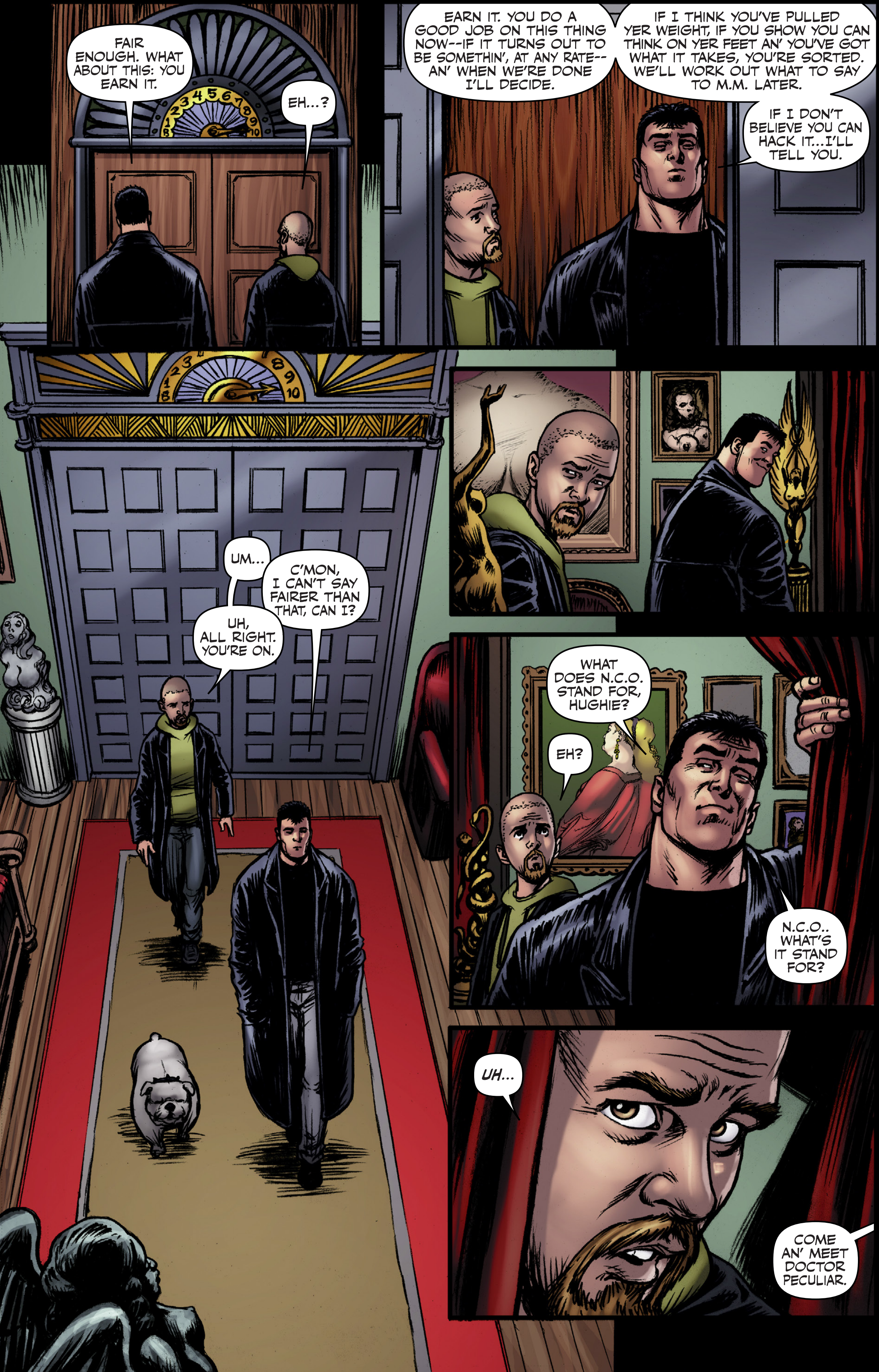

EH? OH. NO, SHE'S OUT O' THE PICTURE.
NO, HOW COULD SHE BE?
SO SHE'S NONE THE WISER ABOUT ANY OF US...
NICE ONE.

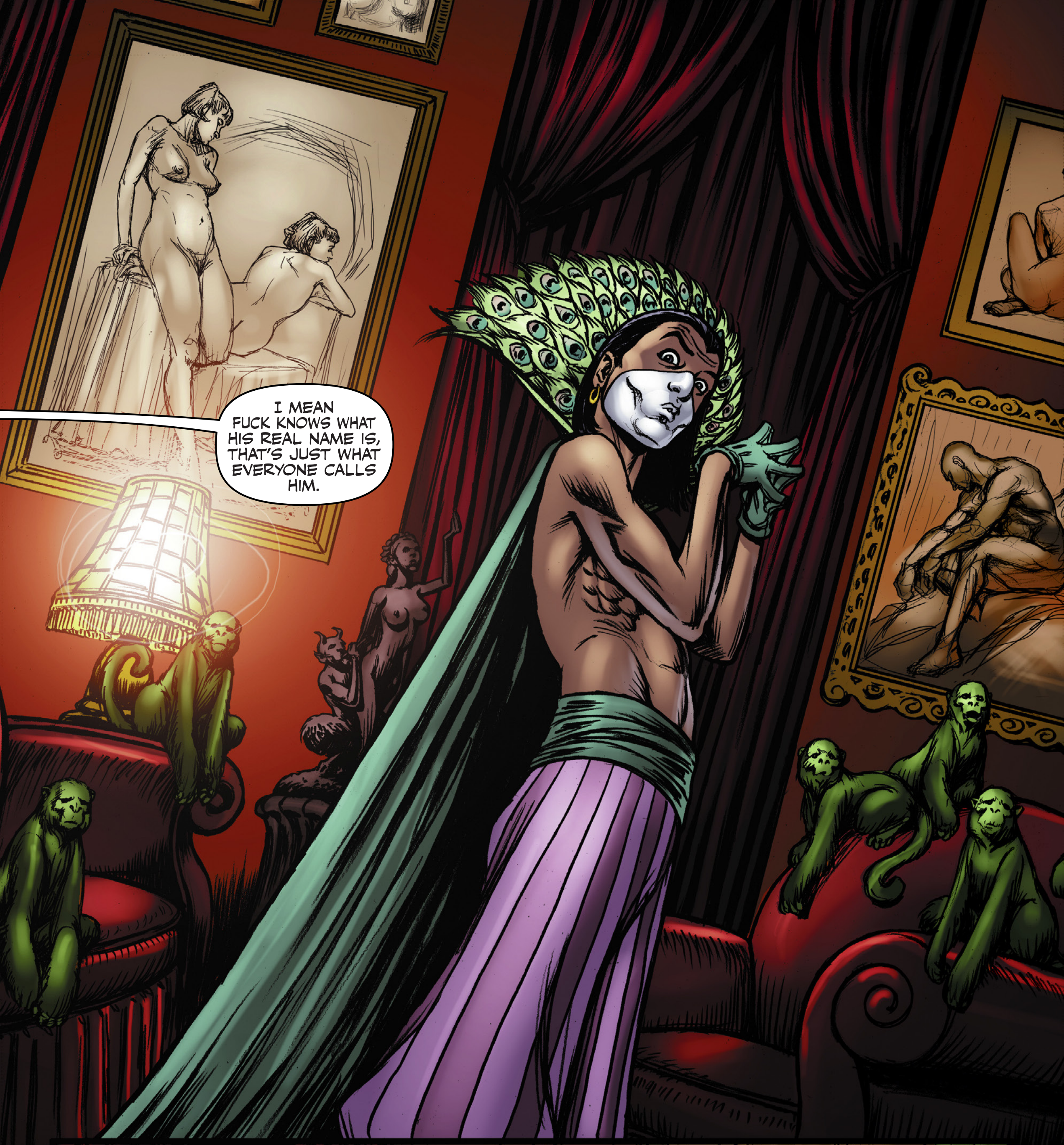

LOOK, BEFORE WE GO AN' SEE THIS SUPE *PIMP* OR WHATEVER HE IS, THERE'S SOMETHIN' WE HAVE TO GET CLEAR:
WHAT, THAT THINGS AIN'T GONNA BE THE SAME?
96
69

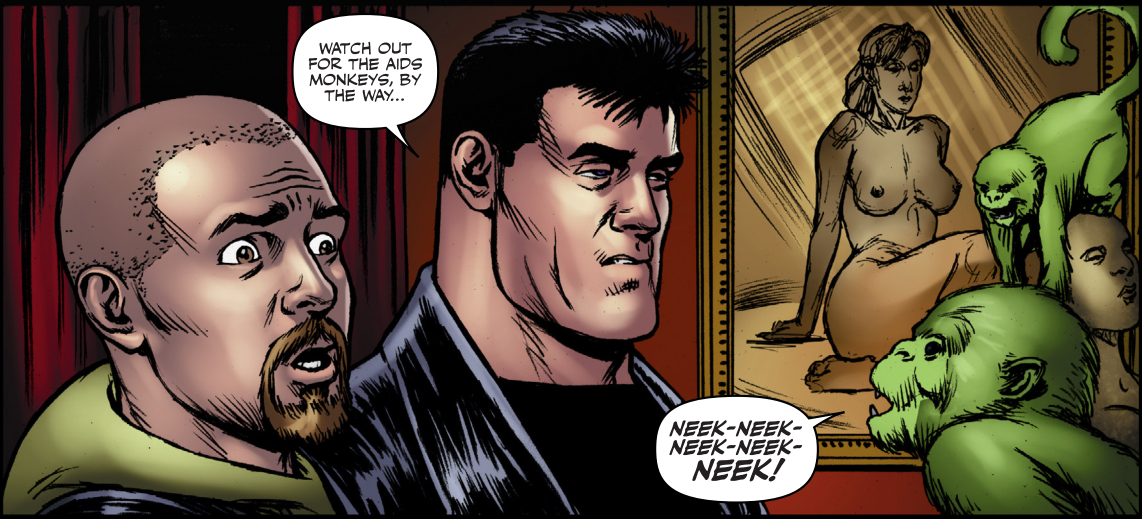

I'M SERIOUS. I DON'T WANNA BE RUNNIN' TO CATCH UP LIKE I USED TO BE, I WANNA BE INVOLVED PROPERLY. EVERY TIME THERE'S AN OPERATION, I WANNA BE PART O' THE DECISION-MAKIN' PROCESS...
BLIMEY, HUGHIE. WHO HAVE YOU BEEN TALKIN' TO?

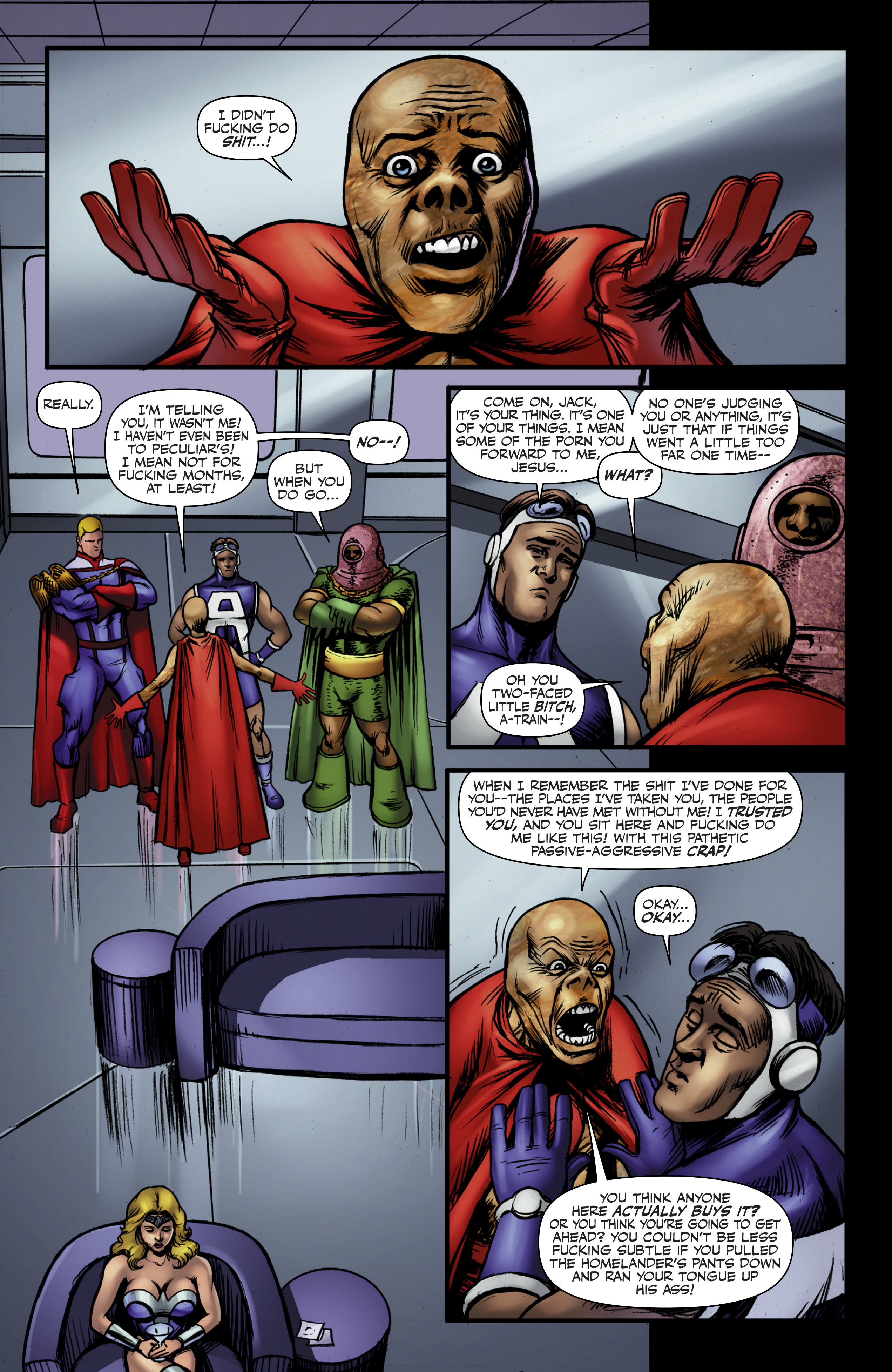

I'VE NO' BEEN *TALKIN'* TO ANYONE, I CAN WORK THINGS FOR MYSELF--I MEAN I CAN WORK THINGS OUT, I CAN THINK FOR MYSELF...!

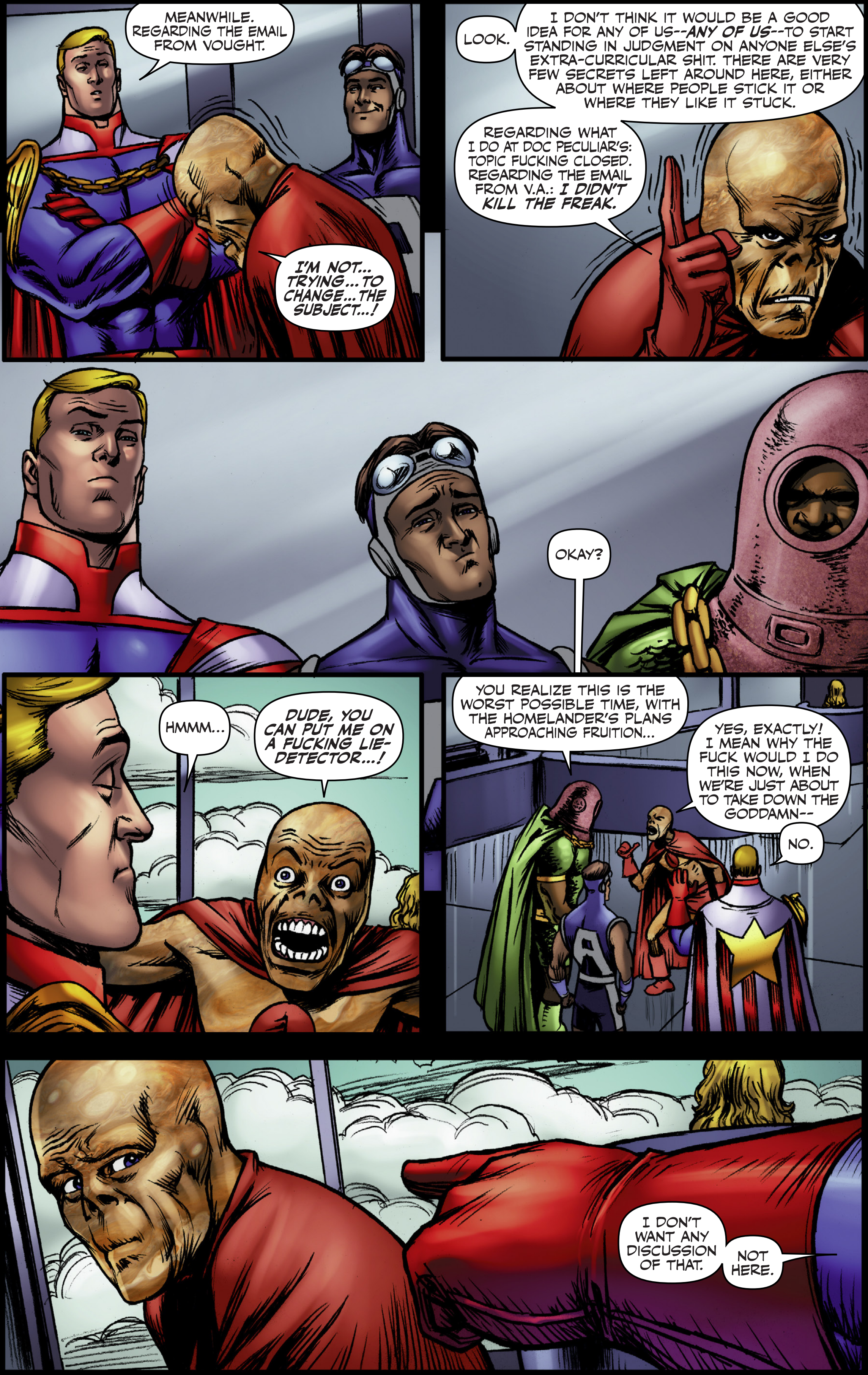

HHHH.
LOOK, THIS IS NON-NEGOTIABLE, ALL RIGHT? THERE WAS A LOT O' STUFF I DIDN'T LIKE, THERE WERE TOO MANY SURPRISES.
SAY ON...
IF I'M GONNA COME BACK FOR GOOD, I WANNA BE ALL THE WAY ON THE INSIDE.
I WANNA BE SECOND IN COMMAND AROUND HERE.
BE LIKE AN N.C.O..
HMM.
THIS IS WHAT YOU SPENT YER SUMMER HOLIDAY THINKIN' ABOUT, IS IT?
I WASN'T ON--
I KNOW.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
ALL RIGHT, I AIN'T SAYIN' I COULDN'T'VE DONE A BETTER JOB O' GIVIN' YOU THE WHYFOR NOW AN' AGAIN, I PROBABLY DO LIKE TO PLAY STUFF A BIT CLOSE TO ME CHEST. BUT YOU GOTTA UNDERSTAND THERE'S TIMES WHEN I CAN'T STOP FOR A SHOW O' HANDS, I'VE GOTTA KEEP THINGS MOVIN' OR WE'RE FUCKED.
THAT'S NO' WHAT I'M--
AN' WHAT ABOUT FRENCHIE AN' M.M.? THEY'VE BOTH BEEN AT THIS LONGER'N YOU HAVE.
"GUESS WHAT, BOYS, HUGHIE'S BACK. OR AS HE'S TO BE KNOWN FROM NOW ON-- ***THE SARGE...***"
I'M NO' SAYIN' YOU'VE GOTTA ***CONSULT ME,*** NO' WHEN THE FUCKIN' SHIT HITS THE FAN. I'M TALKIN' ABOUT BEFORE THAT, BEFORE WE EVEN DECIDE WHAT WE'RE DOIN'.
I'M SORRY, MY MIND'S MADE UP. THAT'S IT.
YOU FUCK OFF FOR NEARLY A MONTH AN' COME BACK AN' DROP THIS IN ME LAP, AN' ALL YOU'LL SAY IS YER MIND'S MADE UP AN' THAT'S IT?
YES...

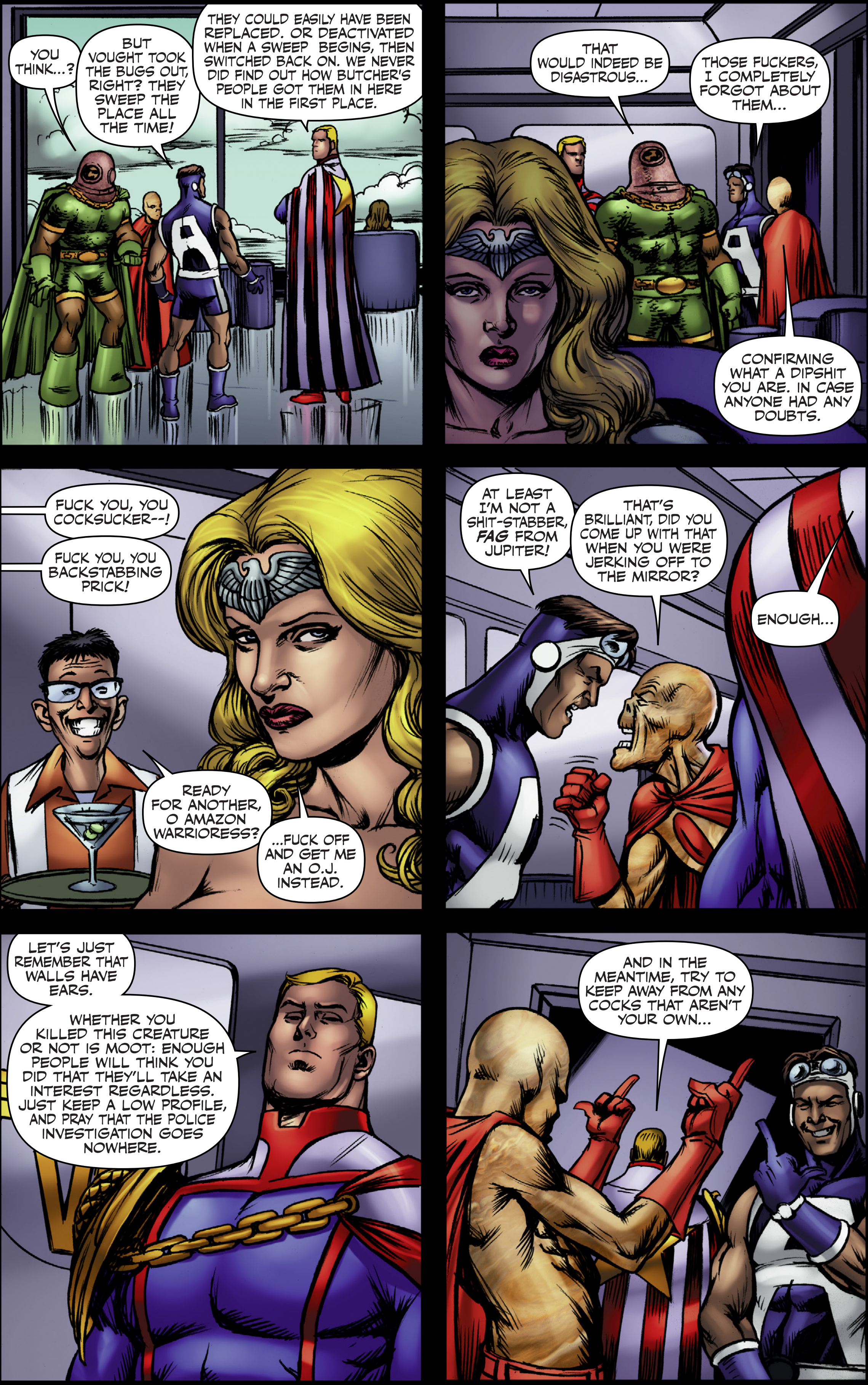

FAIR ENOUGH. WHAT ABOUT THIS: YOU EARN IT.
EH...?
EARN IT. YOU DO A GOOD JOB ON THIS THING NOW--IF IT TURNS OUT TO BE SOMETHIN', AT ANY RATE--AN' WHEN WE'RE DONE I'LL DECIDE.
IF I THINK YOU'VE PULLED YER WEIGHT, IF YOU SHOW YOU CAN THINK ON YER FEET AN' YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES, YOU'RE SORTED. WE'LL WORK OUT WHAT TO SAY TO M.M. LATER.
IF I DON'T BELIEVE YOU CAN HACK IT...I'LL TELL YOU.
UM...
C'MON, I CAN'T SAY FAIRER THAN THAT, CAN I?
UH, ALL RIGHT. YOU'RE ON.
WHAT DOES N.C.O. STAND FOR, HUGHIE?
EH?
N.C.O.. WHAT'S IT STAND FOR?
UH...
COME AN' MEET DOCTOR PECULIAR.

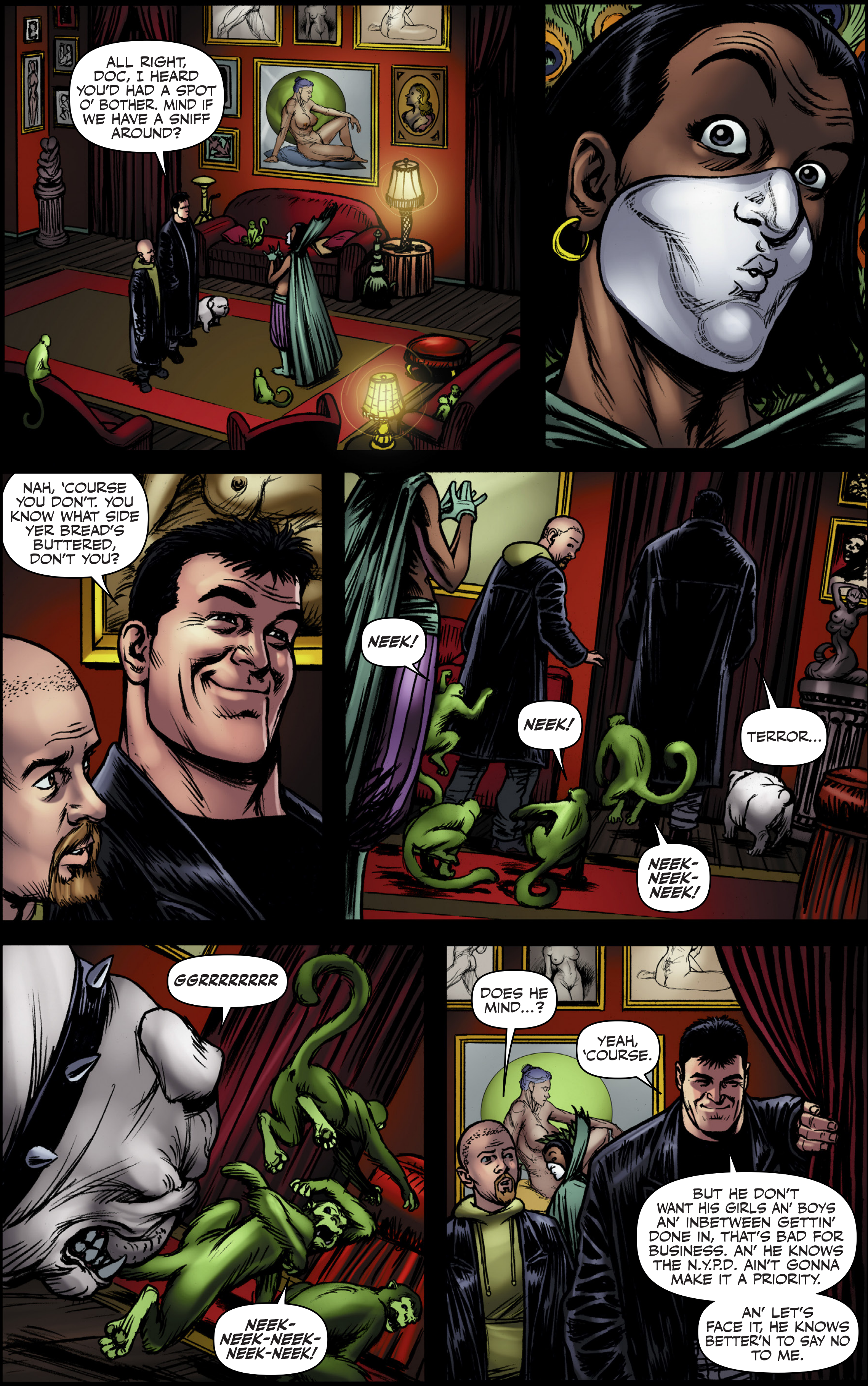

I MEAN FUCK KNOWS WHAT HIS REAL NAME IS, THAT'S JUST WHAT EVERYONE CALLS HIM.

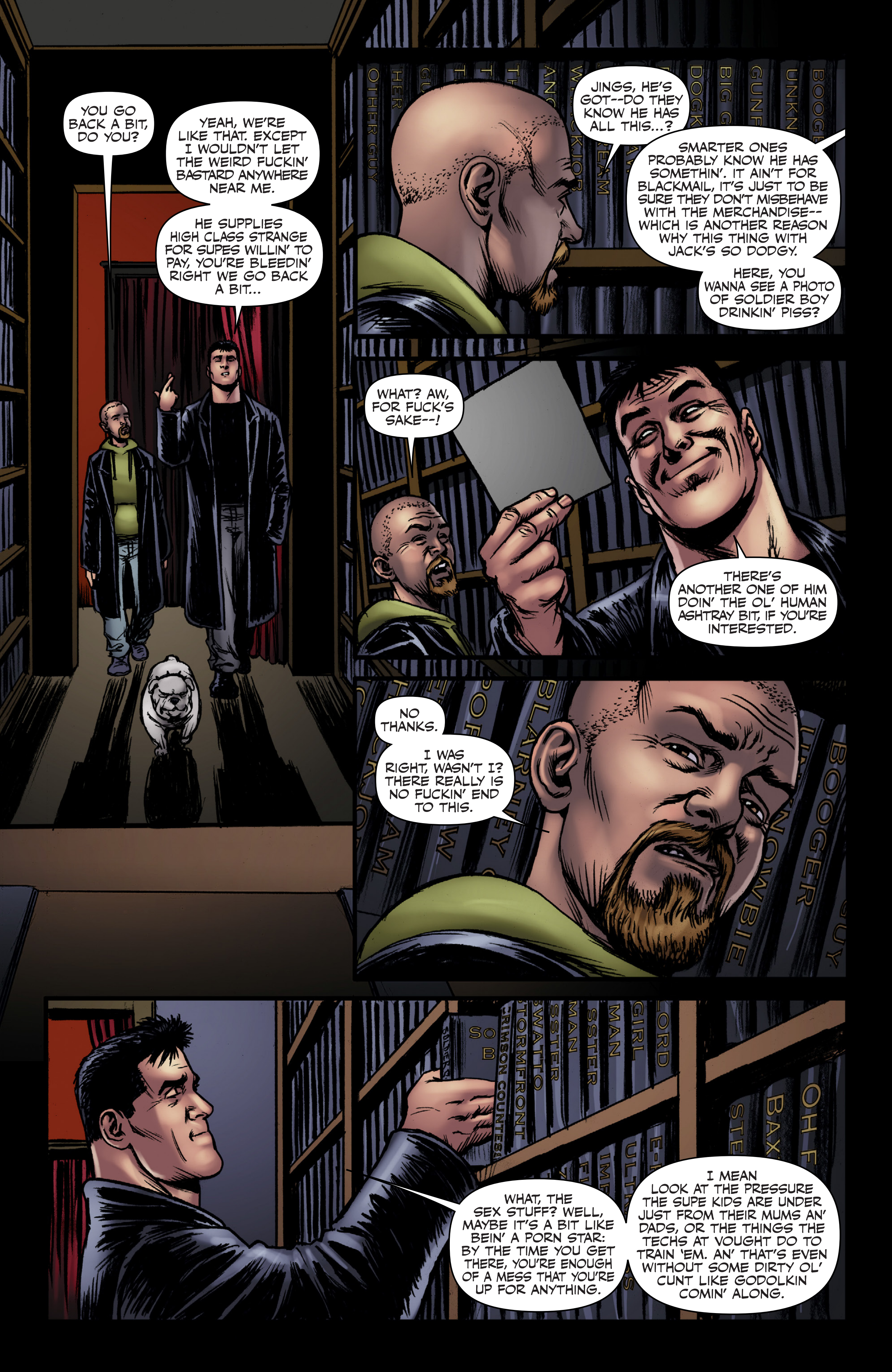

WATCH OUT FOR THE AIDS MONKEYS, BY THE WAY...
NEEK-NEEK-NEEK-NEEK-NEEK!

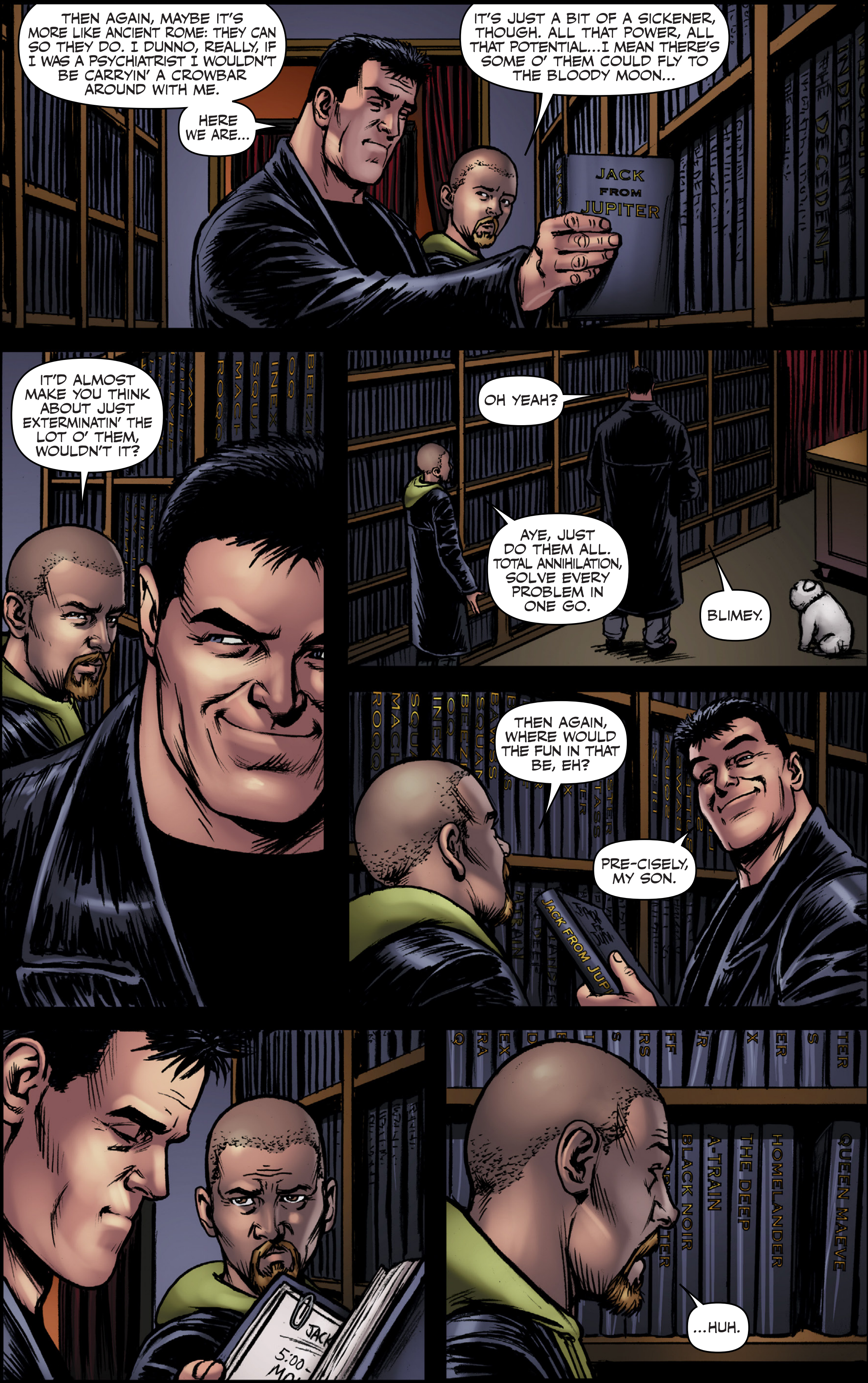

I DIDN'T FUCKING DO *SHIT...!*
REALLY.
I'M TELLING YOU, IT WASN'T ME! I HAVEN'T EVEN BEEN TO PECULIAR'S! I MEAN NOT FOR FUCKING MONTHS, AT LEAST!
NO--!
BUT WHEN YOU DO GO...
COME ON, JACK, IT'S YOUR THING. IT'S ONE OF YOUR THINGS. I MEAN SOME OF THE PORN YOU FORWARD TO ME, JESUS...
NO ONE'S JUDGING YOU OR ANYTHING, IT'S JUST THAT IF THINGS WENT A LITTLE TOO FAR ONE TIME--
WHAT?
OH YOU TWO-FACED LITTLE *BITCH,* A-TRAIN--!
WHEN I REMEMBER THE SHIT I'VE DONE FOR YOU--THE PLACES I'VE TAKEN YOU, THE PEOPLE YOU'D NEVER HAVE MET WITHOUT ME! I *TRUSTED YOU,* AND YOU SIT HERE AND FUCKING DO ME LIKE THIS! WITH THIS PATHETIC PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE *CRAP!*
OKAY... *OKAY...*
YOU THINK ANYONE HERE *ACTUALLY BUYS IT?* OR YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING TO GET AHEAD? YOU COULDN'T BE LESS FUCKING SUBTLE IF YOU PULLED THE HOMELANDER'S PANTS DOWN AND RAN YOUR TONGUE UP HIS ASS!

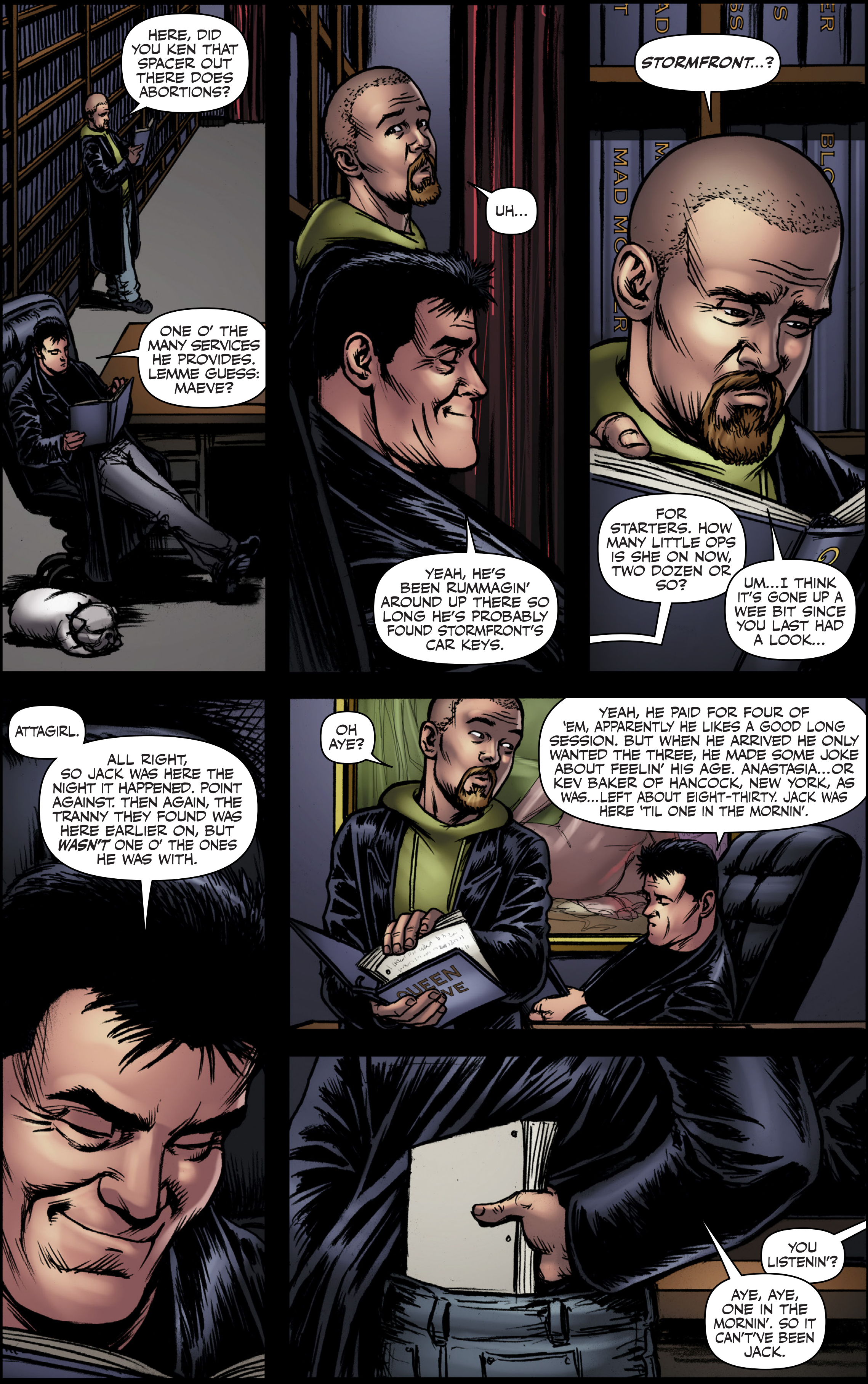

MEANWHILE. REGARDING THE EMAIL FROM VOUGHT.
I'M NOT... TRYING... TO CHANGE... THE SUBJECT...!
LOOK.
I DON'T THINK IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA FOR ANY OF US--*ANY OF US*--TO START STANDING IN JUDGMENT ON ANYONE ELSE'S EXTRA-CURRICULAR SHIT. THERE ARE VERY FEW SECRETS LEFT AROUND HERE, EITHER ABOUT WHERE PEOPLE STICK IT OR WHERE THEY LIKE IT STUCK.
REGARDING WHAT I DO AT DOC PECULIAR'S: TOPIC FUCKING CLOSED. REGARDING THE EMAIL FROM V.A.: *I DIDN'T KILL THE FREAK.*
OKAY?
HMMM...
DUDE, YOU CAN PUT ME ON A FUCKING LIE-DETECTOR...!
YOU REALIZE THIS IS THE WORST POSSIBLE TIME, WITH THE HOMELANDER'S PLANS APPROACHING FRUITION...
YES, EXACTLY! I MEAN WHY THE FUCK WOULD I DO THIS NOW, WHEN WE'RE JUST ABOUT TO TAKE DOWN THE GODDAMN--
NO.
A
I DON'T WANT ANY DISCUSSION OF THAT.
NOT HERE.

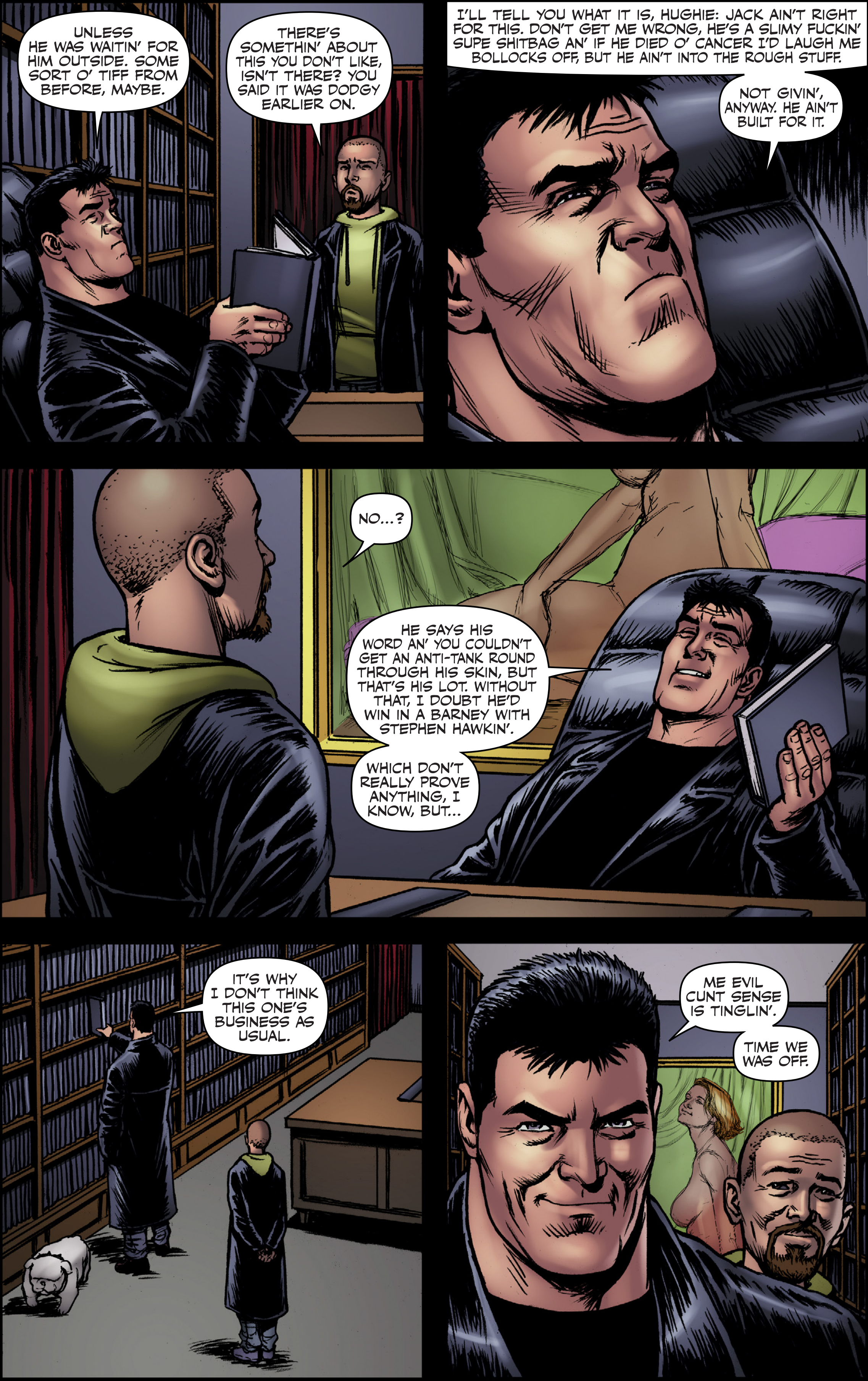

YOU THINK...?
BUT VOUGHT TOOK THE BUGS OUT, RIGHT? THEY SWEEP THE PLACE ALL THE TIME!
THEY COULD EASILY HAVE BEEN REPLACED. OR DEACTIVATED WHEN A SWEEP BEGINS, THEN SWITCHED BACK ON. WE NEVER DID FIND OUT HOW BUTCHER'S PEOPLE GOT THEM IN HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE.
THAT WOULD INDEED BE DISASTROUS...
THOSE FUCKERS, I COMPLETELY FORGOT ABOUT THEM...
CONFIRMING WHAT A DIPSHIT YOU ARE. IN CASE ANYONE HAD ANY DOUBTS.
FUCK YOU, YOU COCKSUCKER--!
FUCK YOU, YOU BACKSTABBING PRICK!
READY FOR ANOTHER, O AMAZON WARRIORESS?
...FUCK OFF AND GET ME AN O.J. INSTEAD.
AT LEAST I'M NOT A SHIT-STABBER, *FAG* FROM JUPITER!
THAT'S BRILLIANT, DID YOU COME UP WITH THAT WHEN YOU WERE JERKING OFF TO THE MIRROR?
ENOUGH...
LET'S JUST REMEMBER THAT WALLS HAVE EARS.
WHETHER YOU KILLED THIS CREATURE OR NOT IS MOOT: ENOUGH PEOPLE WILL THINK YOU DID THAT THEY'LL TAKE AN INTEREST REGARDLESS. JUST KEEP A LOW PROFILE, AND PRAY THAT THE POLICE INVESTIGATION GOES NOWHERE.
AND IN THE MEANTIME, TRY TO KEEP AWAY FROM ANY COCKS THAT AREN'T YOUR OWN...

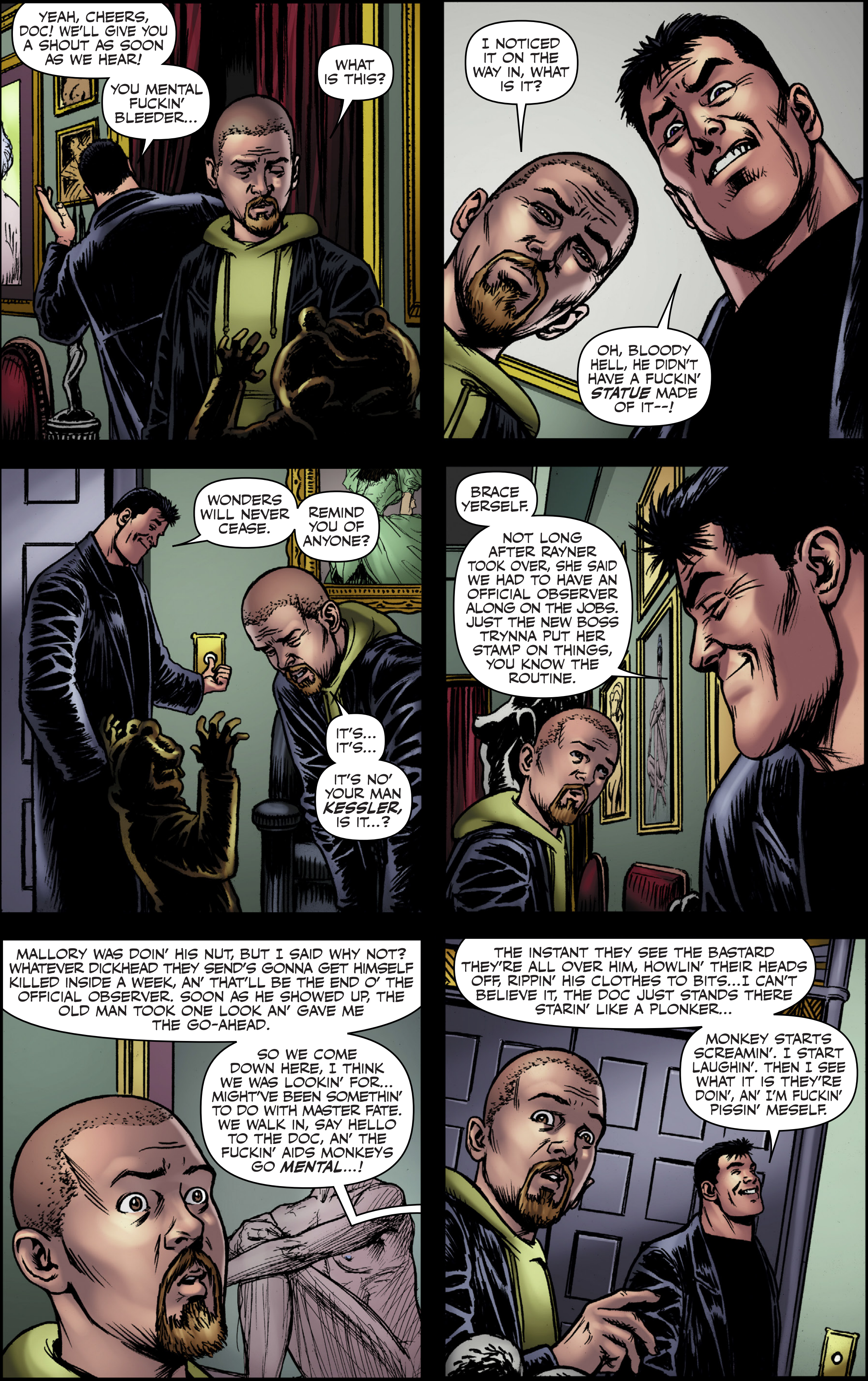

ALL RIGHT, DOC, I HEARD YOU'D HAD A SPOT O' BOTHER. MIND IF WE HAVE A SNIFF AROUND?
NAH, 'COURSE YOU DON'T. YOU KNOW WHAT SIDE YER BREAD'S BUTTERED, DON'T YOU?
NEEK!
NEEK!
TERROR...
NEEK-NEEK-NEEK!
GGRRRRRRRR
NEEK-NEEK-NEEK-NEEK-NEEK!
DOES HE MIND...?
YEAH, 'COURSE.
BUT HE DON'T WANT HIS GIRLS AN' BOYS AN' INBETWEEN GETTIN' DONE IN, THAT'S BAD FOR BUSINESS. AN' HE KNOWS THE N.Y.P.D. AIN'T GONNA MAKE IT A PRIORITY.
AN' LET'S FACE IT, HE KNOWS BETTER'N TO SAY NO TO ME.

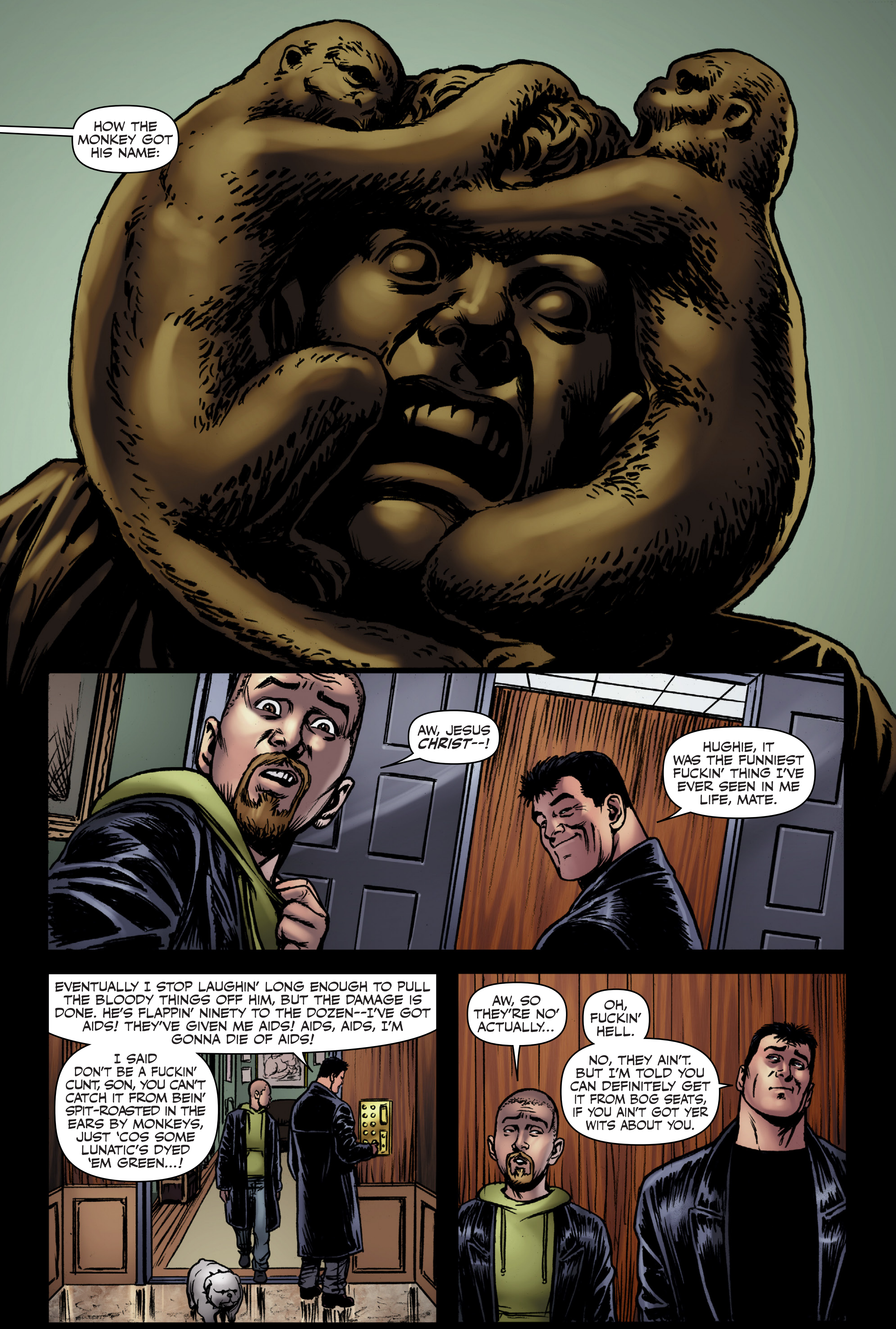

YOU GO BACK A BIT, DO YOU?
YEAH, WE'RE LIKE THAT. EXCEPT I WOULDN'T LET THE WEIRD FUCKIN' BASTARD ANYWHERE NEAR ME.
HE SUPPLIES HIGH CLASS STRANGE FOR SUPES WILLIN' TO PAY, YOU'RE BLEEDIN' RIGHT WE GO BACK A BIT...
JINGS, HE'S GOT--DO THEY KNOW HE HAS ALL THIS...?
SMARTER ONES PROBABLY KNOW HE HAS SOMETHIN'. IT AIN'T FOR BLACKMAIL, IT'S JUST TO BE SURE THEY DON'T MISBEHAVE WITH THE MERCHANDISE-- WHICH IS ANOTHER REASON WHY THIS THING WITH JACK'S SO DODGY.
HERE, YOU WANNA SEE A PHOTO OF SOLDIER BOY DRINKIN' PISS?
WHAT? AW, FOR FUCK'S SAKE--!
THERE'S ANOTHER ONE OF HIM DOIN' THE OL' HUMAN ASHTRAY BIT, IF YOU'RE INTERESTED.
NO THANKS.
I WAS RIGHT, WASN'T I? THERE REALLY IS NO FUCKIN' END TO THIS.
WHAT, THE SEX STUFF? WELL, MAYBE IT'S A BIT LIKE BEIN' A PORN STAR: BY THE TIME YOU GET THERE, YOU'RE ENOUGH OF A MESS THAT YOU'RE UP FOR ANYTHING.
I MEAN LOOK AT THE PRESSURE THE SUPE KIDS ARE UNDER JUST FROM THEIR MUMS AN' DADS, OR THE THINGS THE TECHS AT VOUGHT DO TO TRAIN 'EM. AN' THAT'S EVEN WITHOUT SOME DIRTY OL' CUNT LIKE GODOLKIN COMIN' ALONG.

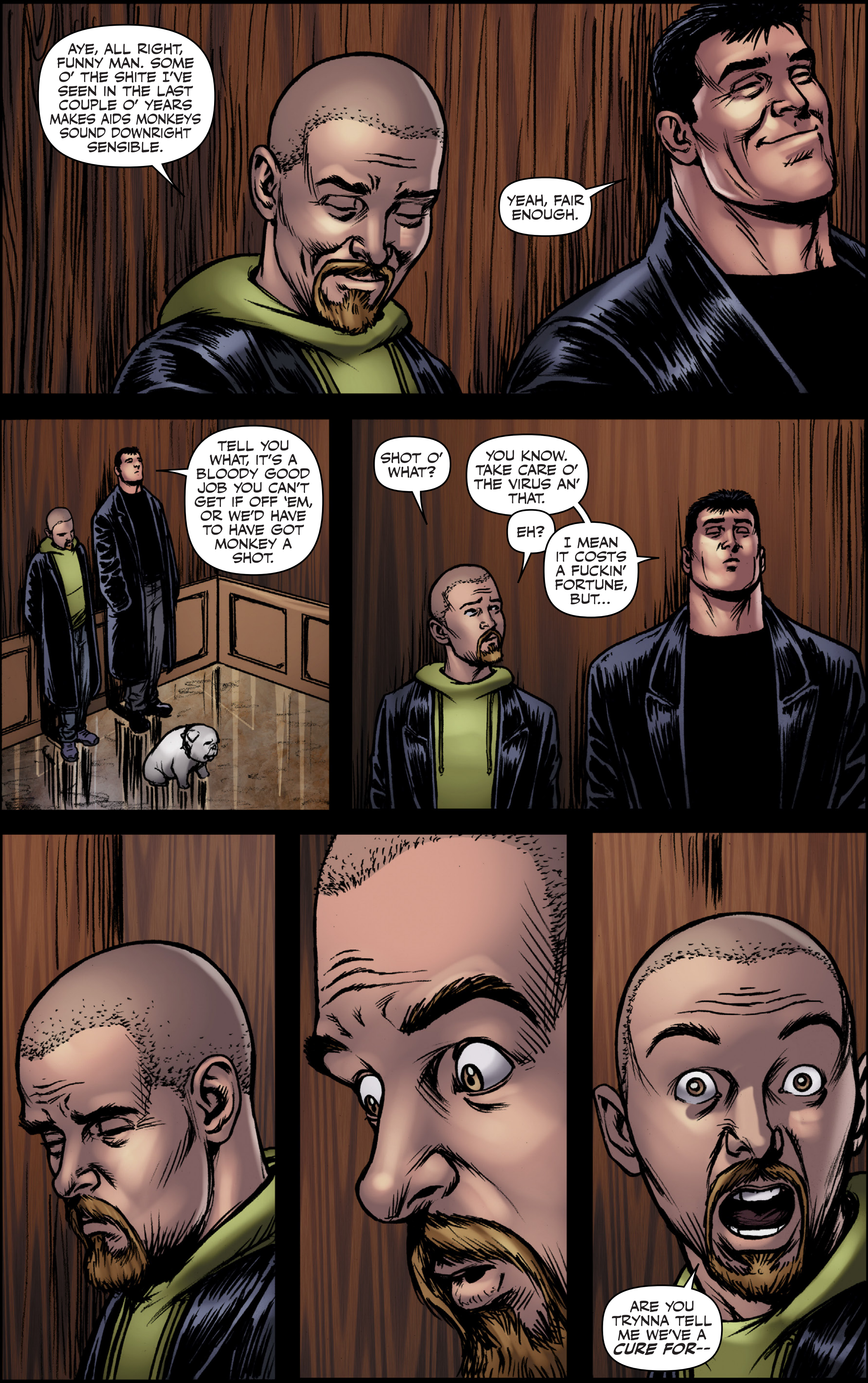

THEN AGAIN, MAYBE IT'S MORE LIKE ANCIENT ROME: THEY CAN SO THEY DO. I DUNNO, REALLY, IF I WAS A PSYCHIATRIST I WOULDN'T BE CARRYIN' A CROWBAR AROUND WITH ME.
HERE WE ARE...
IT'S JUST A BIT OF A SICKENER, THOUGH. ALL THAT POWER, ALL THAT POTENTIAL...I MEAN THERE'S SOME O' THEM COULD FLY TO THE BLOODY MOON...
JACK FROM JUPITER
THE DECEDENT
IT'D ALMOST MAKE YOU THINK ABOUT JUST EXTERMINATIN' THE LOT O' THEM, WOULDN'T IT?
OH YEAH?
AYE, JUST DO THEM ALL. TOTAL ANNIHILATION, SOLVE EVERY PROBLEM IN ONE GO.
BLIMEY.
THEN AGAIN, WHERE WOULD THE FUN IN THAT BE, EH?
PRE-CISELY, MY SON.
JACK FROM JUPI
JACK
5:00
...HUH.
BLACK NOIR
A-TRAIN
THE DEEP
HOMELANDER
QUEEN MAEVE

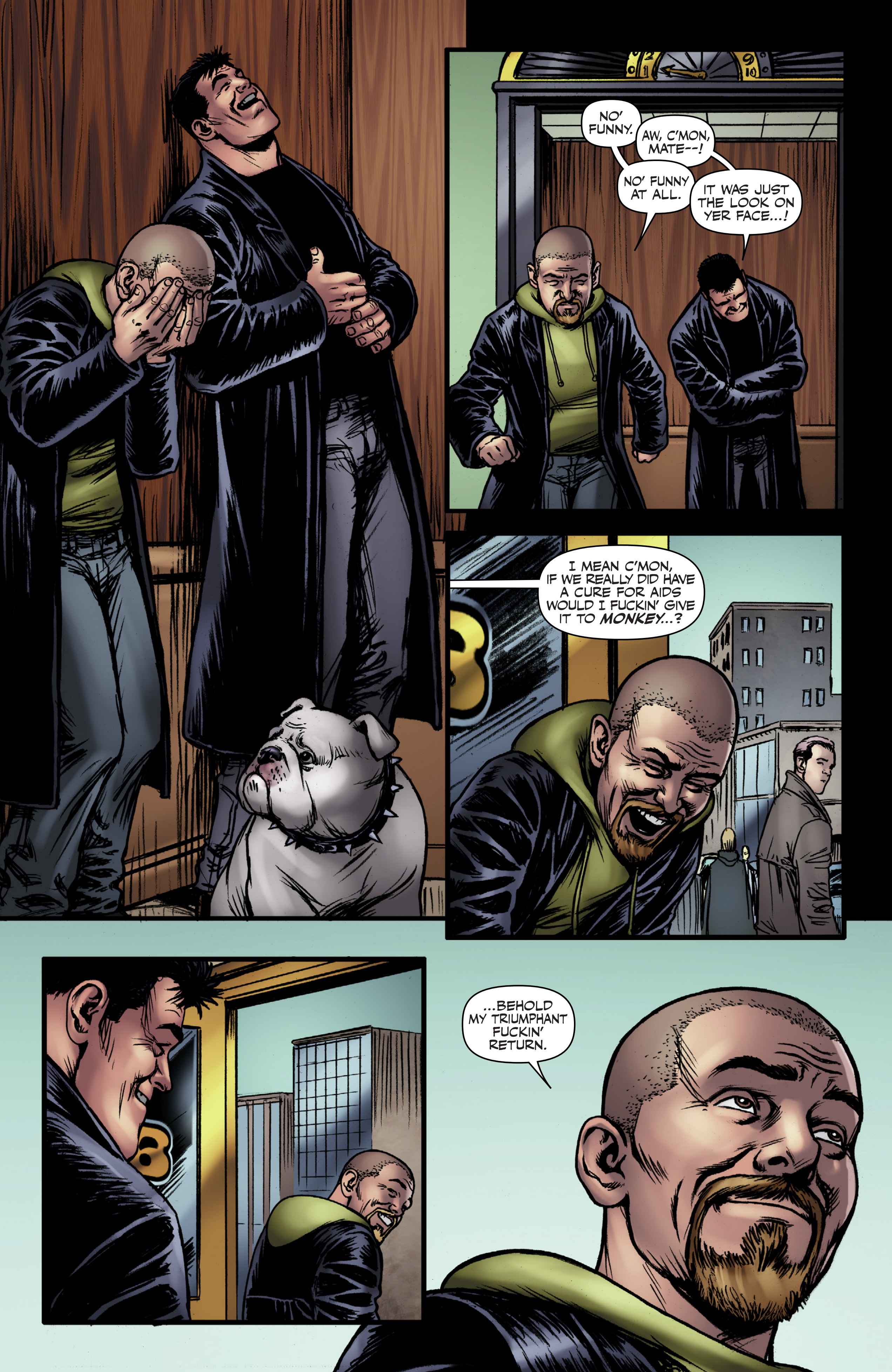

HERE, DID YOU KEN THAT SPACER OUT THERE DOES ABORTIONS?
ONE O' THE MANY SERVICES HE PROVIDES. LEMME GUESS: MAEVE?
UH...
YEAH, HE'S BEEN RUMMAGIN' AROUND UP THERE SO LONG HE'S PROBABLY FOUND STORMFRONT'S CAR KEYS.
STORMFRONT...?
FOR STARTERS. HOW MANY LITTLE OPS IS SHE ON NOW, TWO DOZEN OR SO?
UM...I THINK IT'S GONE UP A WEE BIT SINCE YOU LAST HAD A LOOK...
ATTAGIRL.
ALL RIGHT, SO JACK WAS HERE THE NIGHT IT HAPPENED. POINT AGAINST. THEN AGAIN, THE TRANNY THEY FOUND WAS HERE EARLIER ON, BUT *WASN'T* ONE O' THE ONES HE WAS WITH.
OH AYE?
YEAH, HE PAID FOR FOUR OF 'EM, APPARENTLY HE LIKES A GOOD LONG SESSION. BUT WHEN HE ARRIVED HE ONLY WANTED THE THREE, HE MADE SOME JOKE ABOUT FEELIN' HIS AGE. ANASTASIA...OR KEV BAKER OF HANCOCK, NEW YORK, AS WAS...LEFT ABOUT EIGHT-THIRTY. JACK WAS HERE 'TIL ONE IN THE MORNIN'.
YOU LISTENIN'?
AYE, AYE, ONE IN THE MORNIN'. SO IT CAN'T'VE BEEN JACK.

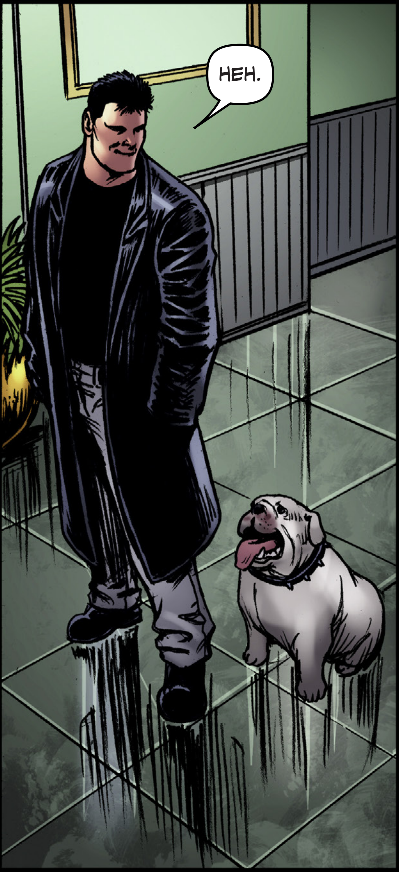

UNLESS HE WAS WAITIN' FOR HIM OUTSIDE. SOME SORT O' TIFF FROM BEFORE, MAYBE.
THERE'S SOMETHIN' ABOUT THIS YOU DON'T LIKE, ISN'T THERE? YOU SAID IT WAS DODGY EARLIER ON.
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT IT IS, HUGHIE: JACK AIN'T RIGHT FOR THIS. DON'T GET ME WRONG, HE'S A SLIMY FUCKIN' SUPE SHITBAG AN' IF HE DIED O' CANCER I'D LAUGH ME BOLLOCKS OFF, BUT HE AIN'T INTO THE ROUGH STUFF.
NOT GIVIN', ANYWAY. HE AIN'T BUILT FOR IT.
NO...?
HE SAYS HIS WORD AN' YOU COULDN'T GET AN ANTI-TANK ROUND THROUGH HIS SKIN, BUT THAT'S HIS LOT. WITHOUT THAT, I DOUBT HE'D WIN IN A BARNEY WITH STEPHEN HAWKIN'.
WHICH DON'T REALLY PROVE ANYTHING, I KNOW, BUT...
IT'S WHY I DON'T THINK THIS ONE'S BUSINESS AS USUAL.
ME EVIL CUNT SENSE IS TINGLIN'.
TIME WE WAS OFF.

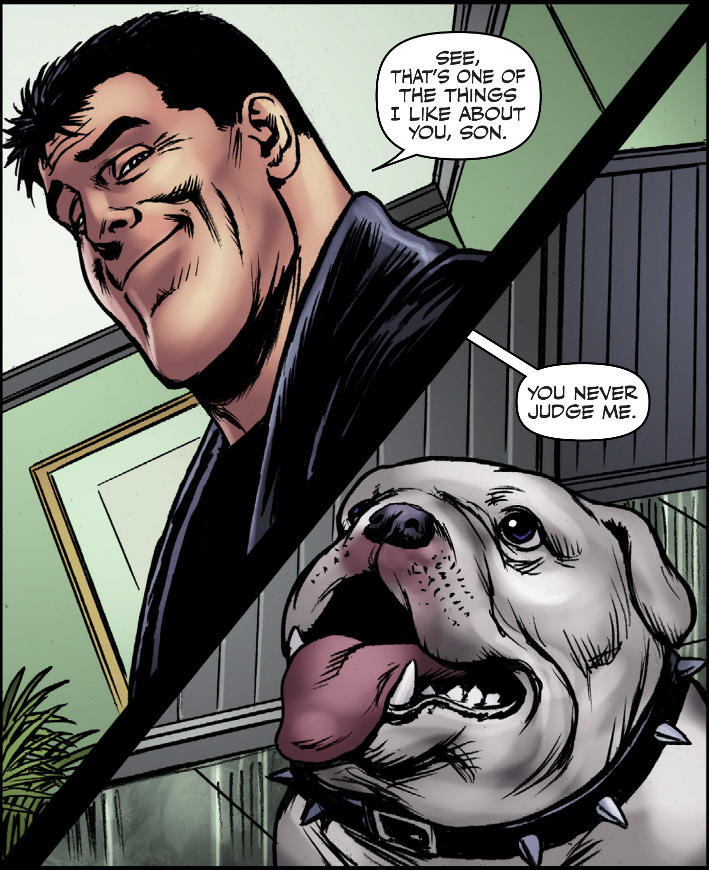

YEAH, CHEERS, DOC! WE'LL GIVE YOU A SHOUT AS SOON AS WE HEAR!
YOU MENTAL FUCKIN' BLEEDER...
WHAT IS THIS?
I NOTICED IT ON THE WAY IN, WHAT IS IT?
OH, BLOODY HELL, HE DIDN'T HAVE A FUCKIN' *STATUE* MADE OF IT--!
WONDERS WILL NEVER CEASE.
REMIND YOU OF ANYONE?
IT'S... IT'S...
IT'S NO' YOUR MAN *KESSLER*, IS IT...?
BRACE YERSELF.
NOT LONG AFTER RAYNER TOOK OVER, SHE SAID WE HAD TO HAVE AN OFFICIAL OBSERVER ALONG ON THE JOBS. JUST THE NEW BOSS TRYNNA PUT HER STAMP ON THINGS, YOU KNOW THE ROUTINE.
MALLORY WAS DOIN' HIS NUT, BUT I SAID WHY NOT? WHATEVER DICKHEAD THEY SEND'S GONNA GET HIMSELF KILLED INSIDE A WEEK, AN' THAT'LL BE THE END O' THE OFFICIAL OBSERVER. SOON AS HE SHOWED UP, THE OLD MAN TOOK ONE LOOK AN' GAVE ME THE GO-AHEAD.
SO WE COME DOWN HERE, I THINK WE WAS LOOKIN' FOR... MIGHT'VE BEEN SOMETHIN' TO DO WITH MASTER FATE. WE WALK IN, SAY HELLO TO THE DOC, AN' THE FUCKIN' AIDS MONKEYS GO *MENTAL*...!
THE INSTANT THEY SEE THE BASTARD THEY'RE ALL OVER HIM, HOWLIN' THEIR HEADS OFF, RIPPIN' HIS CLOTHES TO BITS...I CAN'T BELIEVE IT, THE DOC JUST STANDS THERE STARIN' LIKE A PLONKER...
MONKEY STARTS SCREAMIN'. I START LAUGHIN'. THEN I SEE WHAT IT IS THEY'RE DOIN', AN' I'M FUCKIN' PISSIN' MESELF.

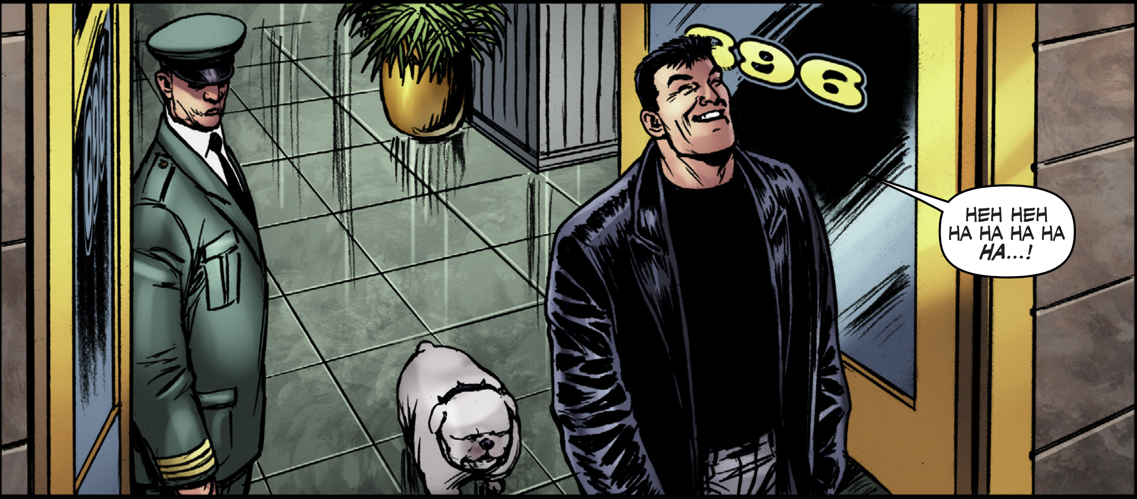

HOW THE MONKEY GOT HIS NAME:
AW, JESUS *CHRIST*--!
HUGHIE, IT WAS THE FUNNIEST FUCKIN' THING I'VE EVER SEEN IN ME LIFE, MATE.
EVENTUALLY I STOP LAUGHIN' LONG ENOUGH TO PULL THE BLOODY THINGS OFF HIM, BUT THE DAMAGE IS DONE. HE'S FLAPPIN' NINETY TO THE DOZEN--I'VE GOT AIDS! THEY'VE GIVEN ME AIDS! AIDS, AIDS, I'M GONNA DIE OF AIDS!
I SAID DON'T BE A FUCKIN' CUNT, SON, YOU CAN'T CATCH IT FROM BEIN' SPIT-ROASTED IN THE EARS BY MONKEYS, JUST 'COS SOME LUNATIC'S DYED 'EM GREEN...!
AW, SO THEY'RE NO' ACTUALLY...
OH, FUCKIN' HELL.
NO, THEY AIN'T. BUT I'M TOLD YOU CAN DEFINITELY GET IT FROM BOG SEATS, IF YOU AIN'T GOT YER WITS ABOUT YOU.

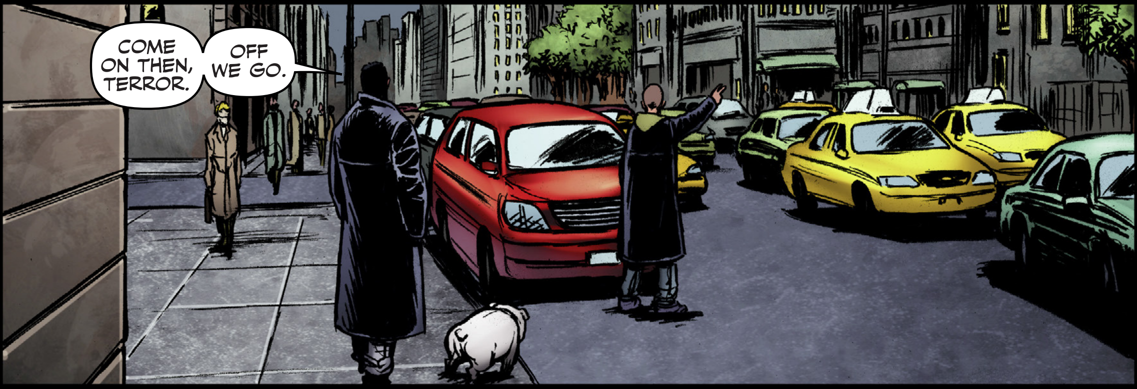

AYE, ALL RIGHT, FUNNY MAN. SOME O' THE SHITE I'VE SEEN IN THE LAST COUPLE O' YEARS MAKES AIDS MONKEYS SOUND DOWNRIGHT SENSIBLE.
YEAH, FAIR ENOUGH.
TELL YOU WHAT, IT'S A BLOODY GOOD JOB YOU CAN'T GET IF OFF 'EM, OR WE'D HAVE TO HAVE GOT MONKEY A SHOT.
SHOT O' WHAT?
YOU KNOW. TAKE CARE O' THE VIRUS AN' THAT.
EH?
I MEAN IT COSTS A FUCKIN' FORTUNE, BUT...
ARE YOU TRYNNA TELL ME WE'VE A *CURE FOR--*


NO' FUNNY.
AW, C'MON, MATE--!
NO' FUNNY AT ALL.
IT WAS JUST THE LOOK ON YER FACE...!
I MEAN C'MON, IF WE REALLY DID HAVE A CURE FOR AIDS WOULD I FUCKIN' GIVE IT TO *MONKEY*...?
...BEHOLD MY TRIUMPHANT FUCKIN' RETURN.

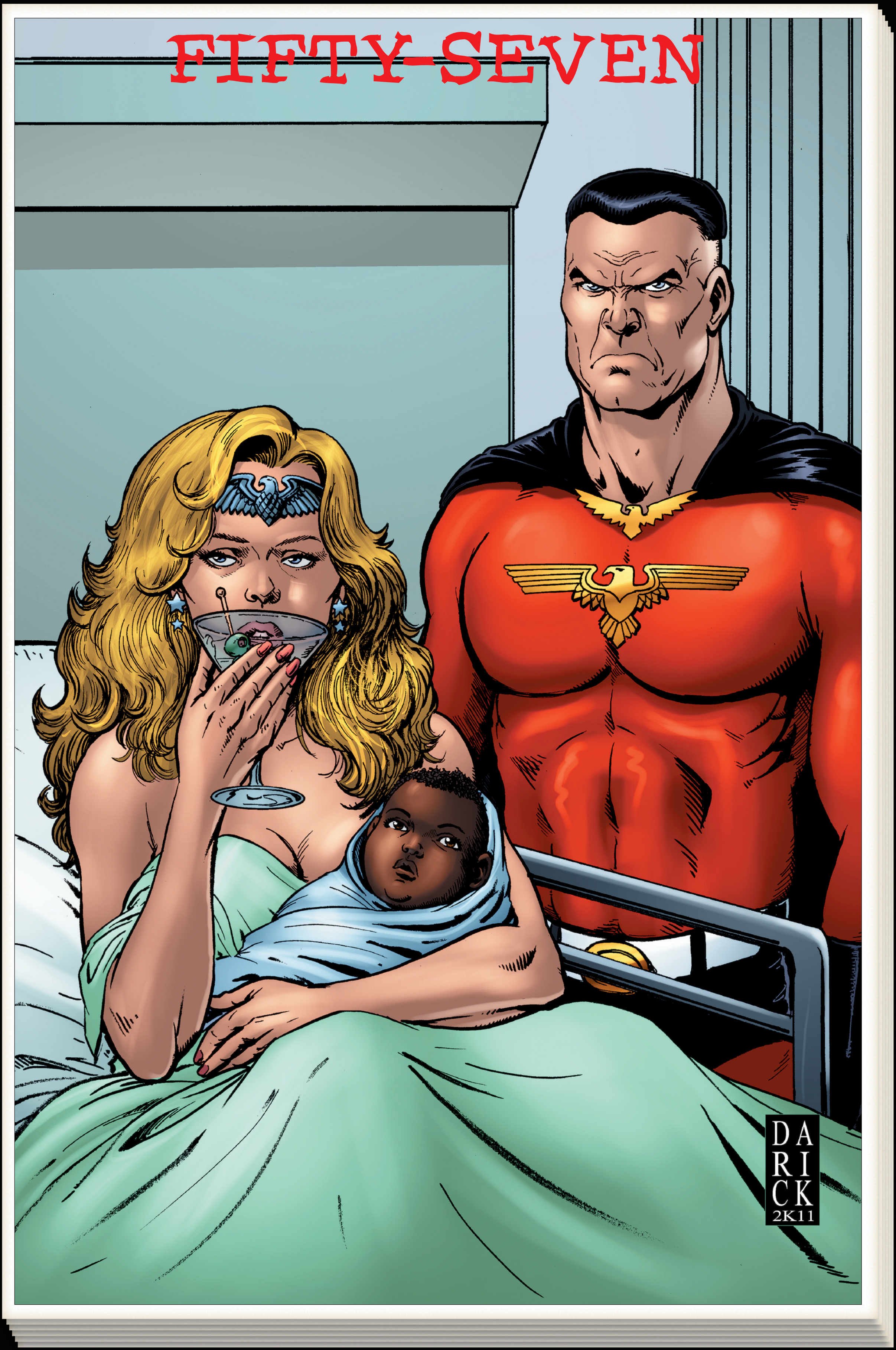


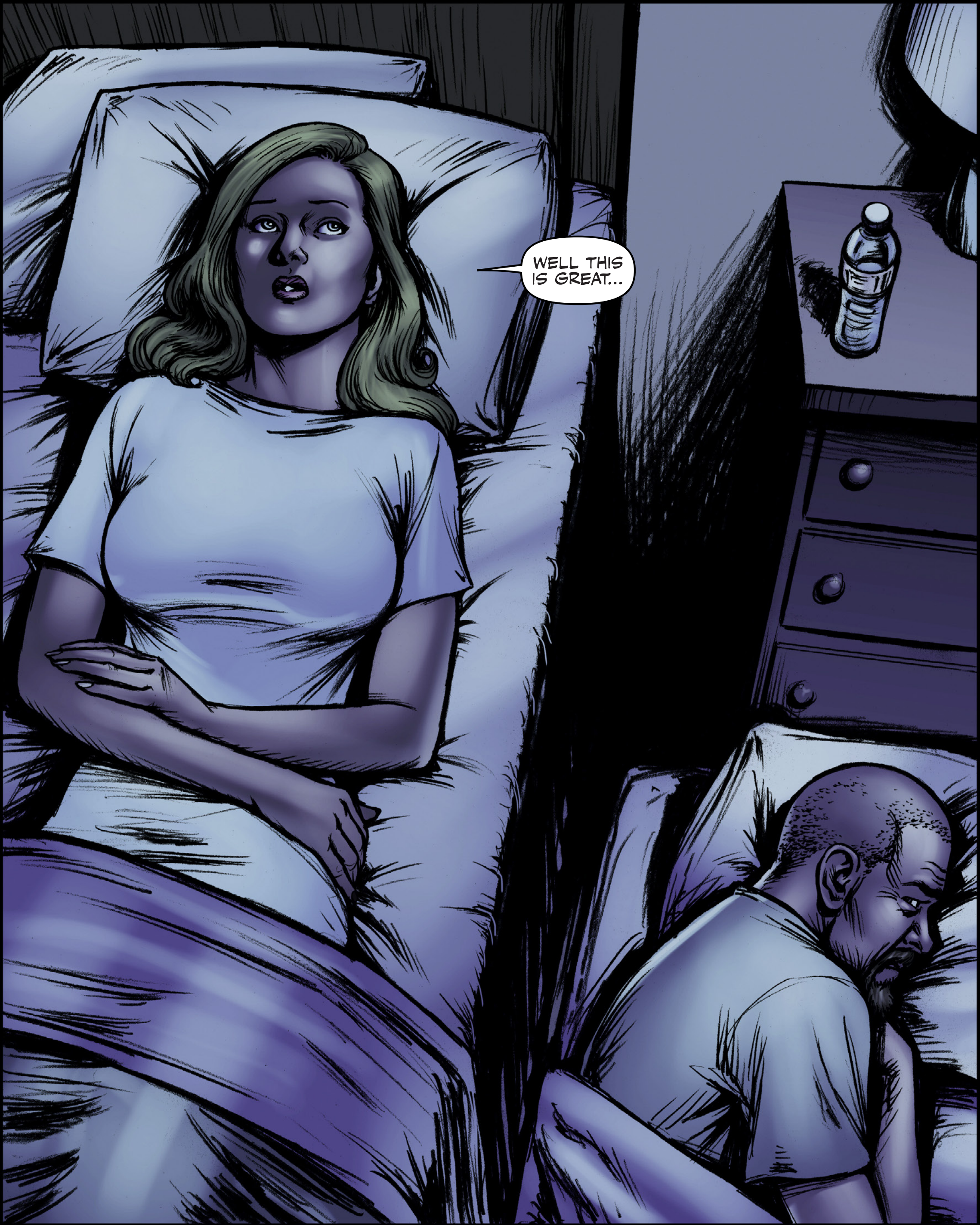

SEE, THAT'S ONE OF THE THINGS I LIKE ABOUT YOU, SON.
YOU NEVER JUDGE ME.


HEH HEH HA HA HA HA *HA*...!


COME ON THEN, TERROR.
OFF WE GO.

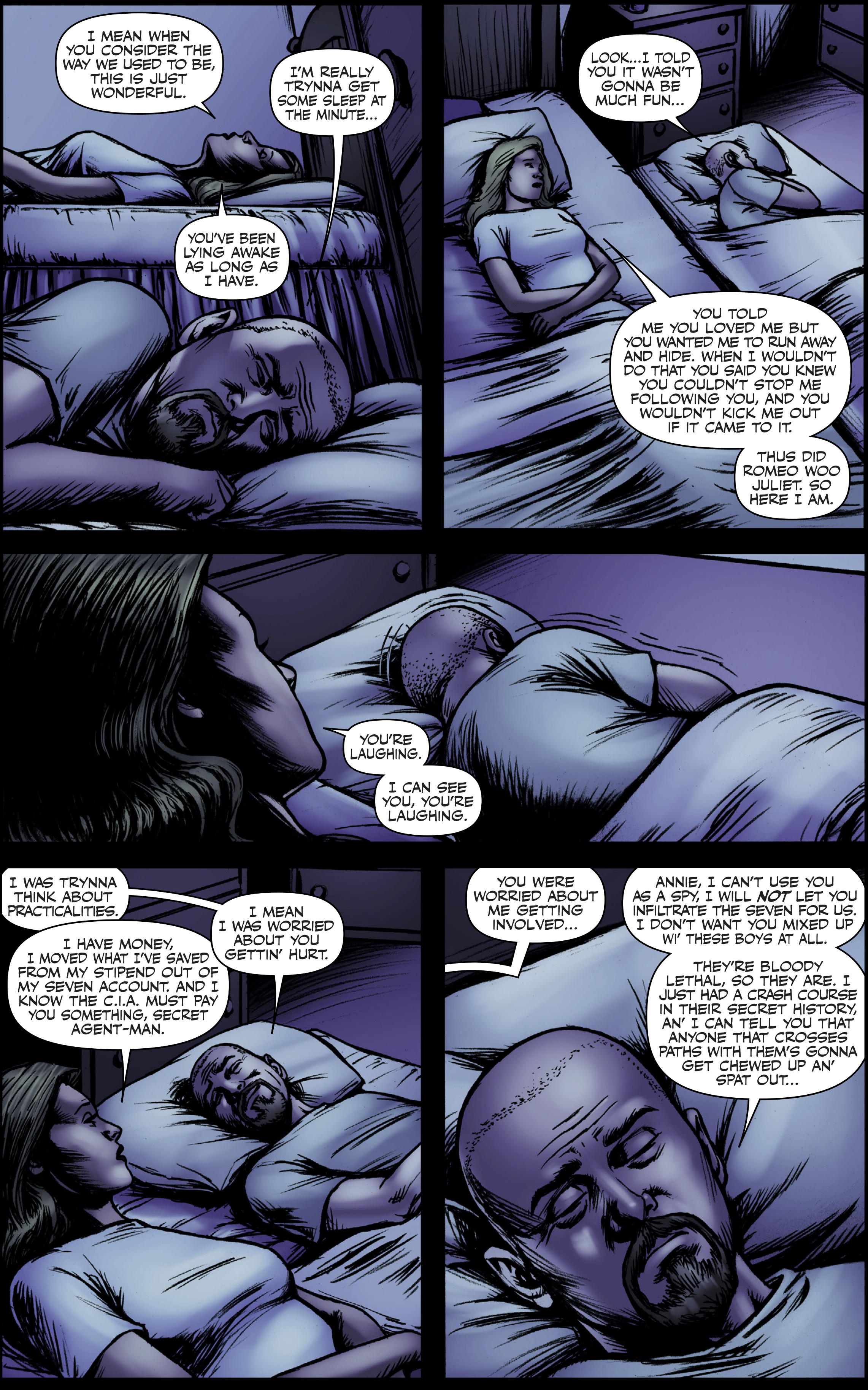
next: ANNIE-NONYMOUS

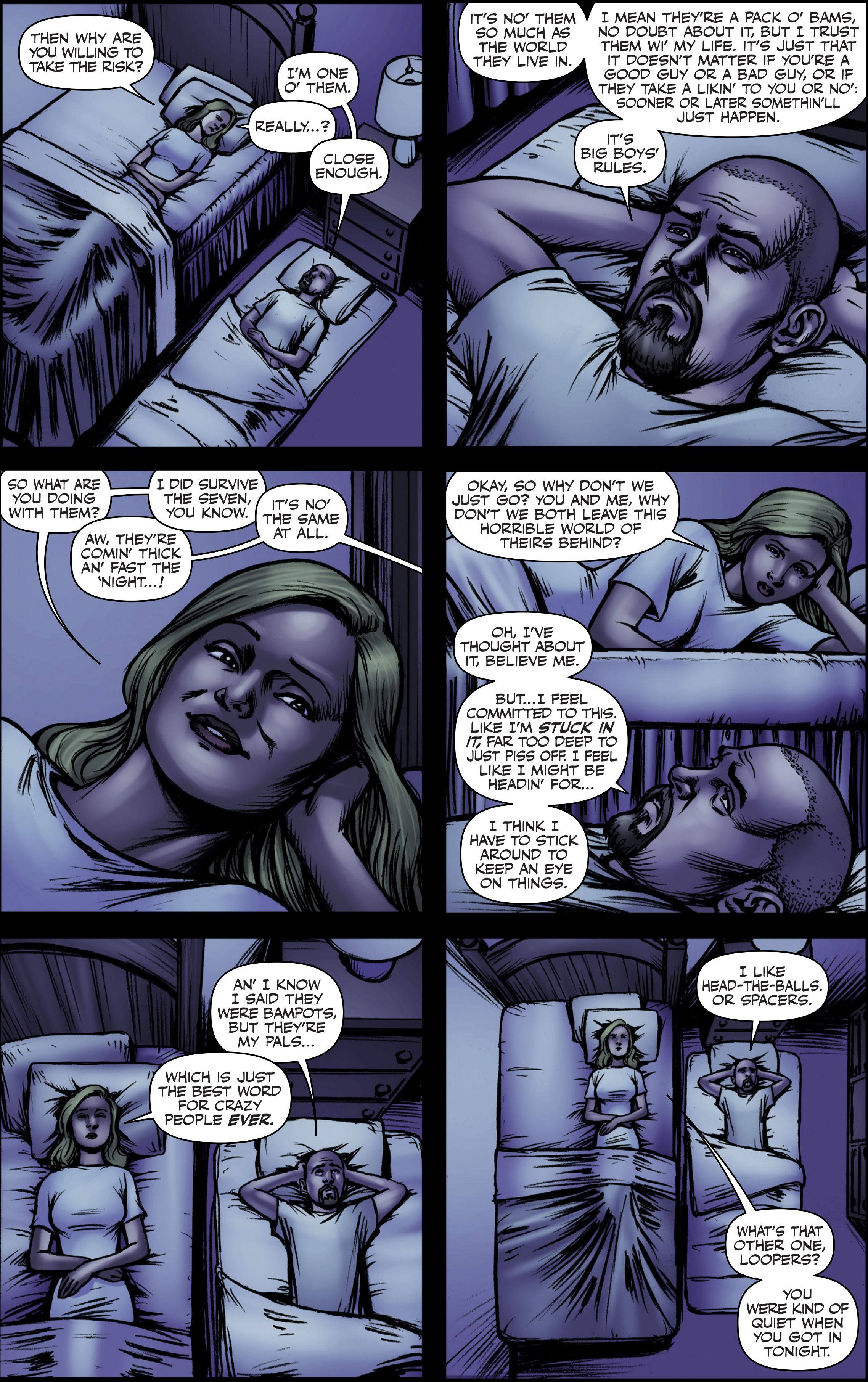

FIFTY-SEVEN
DARICK 2K11

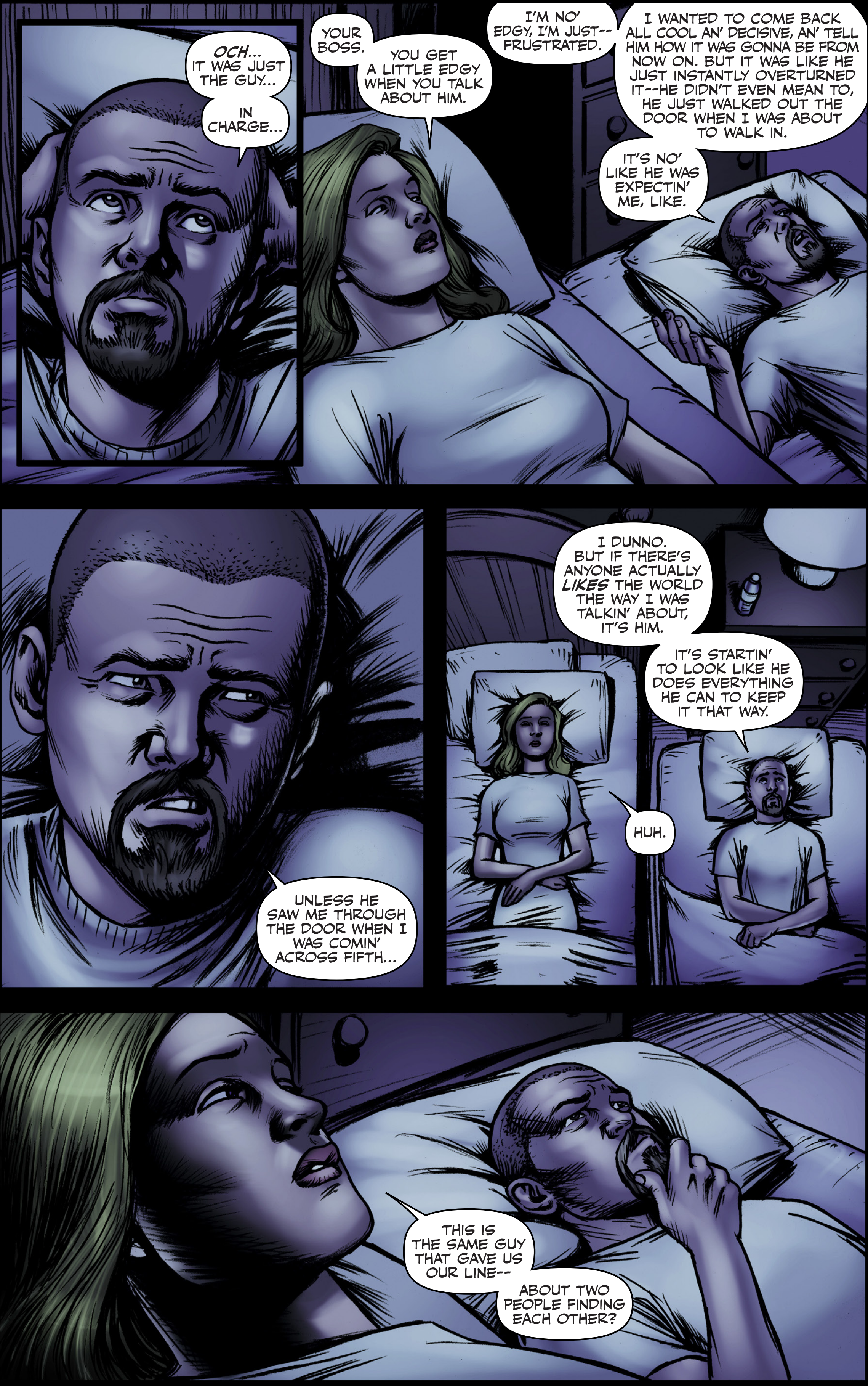

WELL THIS IS GREAT...

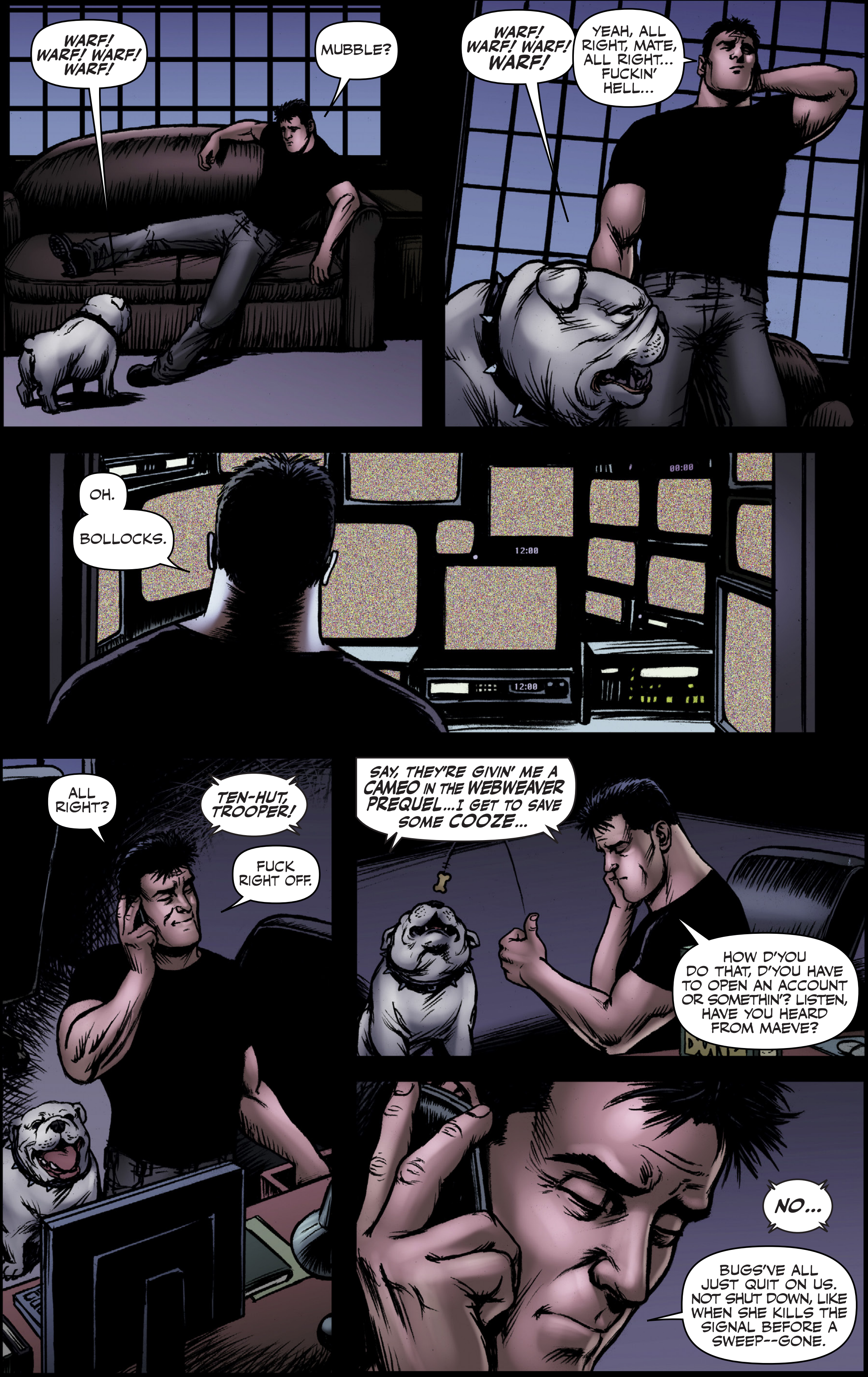
THE BIG RIDE

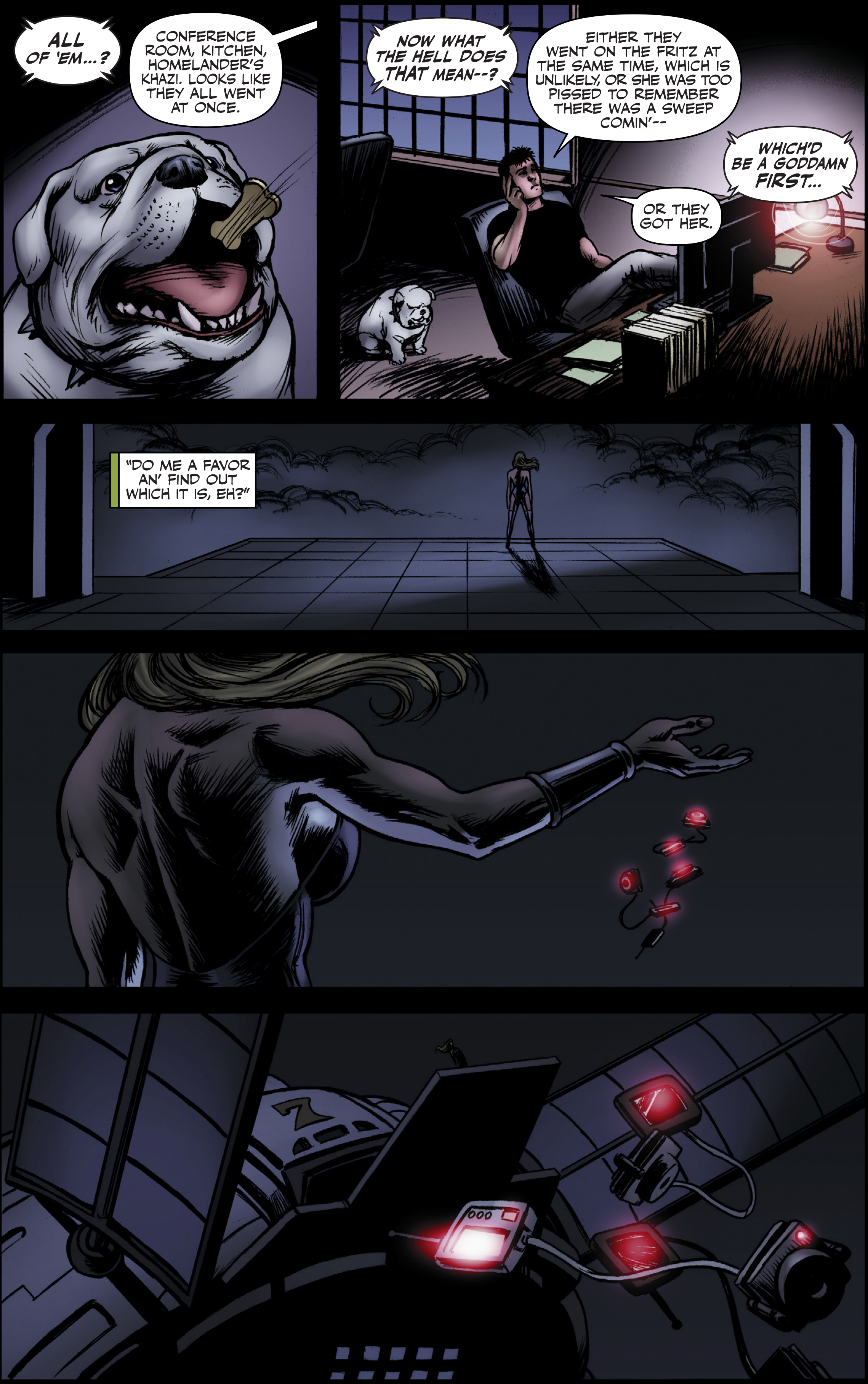
part two

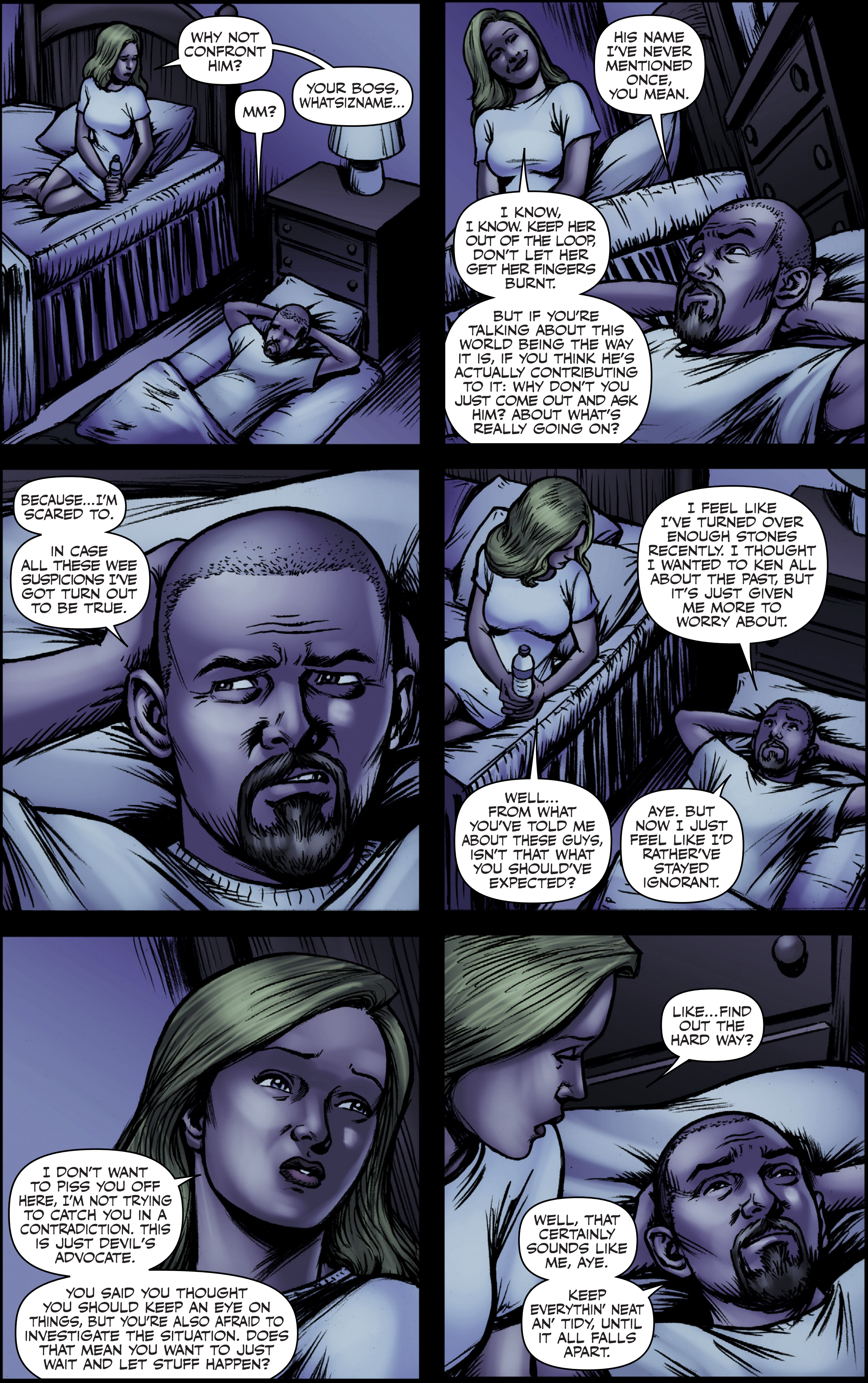

I MEAN WHEN YOU CONSIDER THE WAY WE USED TO BE, THIS IS JUST WONDERFUL.
I'M REALLY TRYNNA GET SOME SLEEP AT THE MINUTE...
YOU'VE BEEN LYING AWAKE AS LONG AS I HAVE.
LOOK...I TOLD YOU IT WASN'T GONNA BE MUCH FUN...
YOU TOLD ME YOU LOVED ME BUT YOU WANTED ME TO RUN AWAY AND HIDE. WHEN I WOULDN'T DO THAT YOU SAID YOU KNEW YOU COULDN'T STOP ME FOLLOWING YOU, AND YOU WOULDN'T KICK ME OUT IF IT CAME TO IT.
THUS DID ROMEO WOO JULIET. SO HERE I AM.
YOU'RE LAUGHING.
I CAN SEE YOU, YOU'RE LAUGHING.
I WAS TRYNNA THINK ABOUT PRACTICALITIES.
I MEAN I WAS WORRIED ABOUT YOU GETTIN' HURT.
I HAVE MONEY, I MOVED WHAT I'VE SAVED FROM MY STIPEND OUT OF MY SEVEN ACCOUNT. AND I KNOW THE C.I.A. MUST PAY YOU SOMETHING, SECRET AGENT-MAN.
YOU WERE WORRIED ABOUT ME GETTING INVOLVED...
ANNIE, I CAN'T USE YOU AS A SPY, I WILL *NOT* LET YOU INFILTRATE THE SEVEN FOR US. I DON'T WANT YOU MIXED UP WI' THESE BOYS AT ALL.
THEY'RE BLOODY LETHAL, SO THEY ARE. I JUST HAD A CRASH COURSE IN THEIR SECRET HISTORY, AN' I CAN TELL YOU THAT ANYONE THAT CROSSES PATHS WITH THEM'S GONNA GET CHEWED UP AN' SPAT OUT...

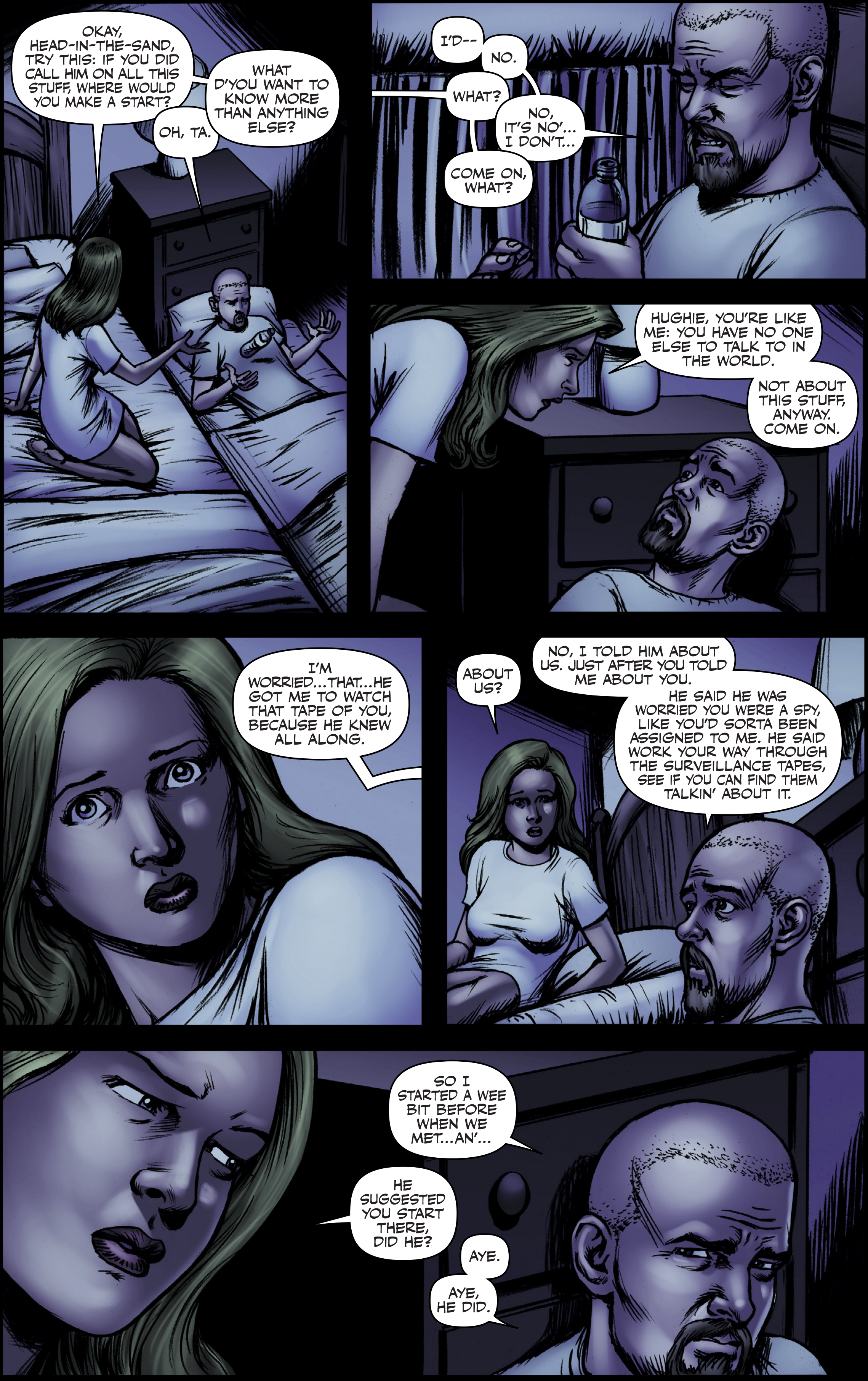

THEN WHY ARE YOU WILLING TO TAKE THE RISK?
I'M ONE O' THEM.
REALLY...?
CLOSE ENOUGH.
IT'S NO' THEM SO MUCH AS THE WORLD THEY LIVE IN.
I MEAN THEY'RE A PACK O' BAMS, NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, BUT I TRUST THEM WI' MY LIFE. IT'S JUST THAT IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU'RE A GOOD GUY OR A BAD GUY, OR IF THEY TAKE A LIKIN' TO YOU OR NO': SOONER OR LATER SOMETHIN'LL JUST HAPPEN.
IT'S BIG BOYS' RULES.
SO WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THEM?
I DID SURVIVE THE SEVEN, YOU KNOW.
AW, THEY'RE COMIN' THICK AN' FAST THE 'NIGHT...!
IT'S NO' THE SAME AT ALL.
OKAY, SO WHY DON'T WE JUST GO? YOU AND ME, WHY DON'T WE BOTH LEAVE THIS HORRIBLE WORLD OF THEIRS BEHIND?
OH, I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT IT, BELIEVE ME.
BUT...I FEEL COMMITTED TO THIS. LIKE I'M *STUCK IN IT,* FAR TOO DEEP TO JUST PISS OFF. I FEEL LIKE I MIGHT BE HEADIN' FOR...
I THINK I HAVE TO STICK AROUND TO KEEP AN EYE ON THINGS.
AN' I KNOW I SAID THEY WERE BAMPOTS, BUT THEY'RE MY PALS...
WHICH IS JUST THE BEST WORD FOR CRAZY PEOPLE *EVER.*
I LIKE HEAD-THE-BALLS. OR SPACERS.
WHAT'S THAT OTHER ONE, LOOPERS?
YOU WERE KIND OF QUIET WHEN YOU GOT IN TONIGHT.

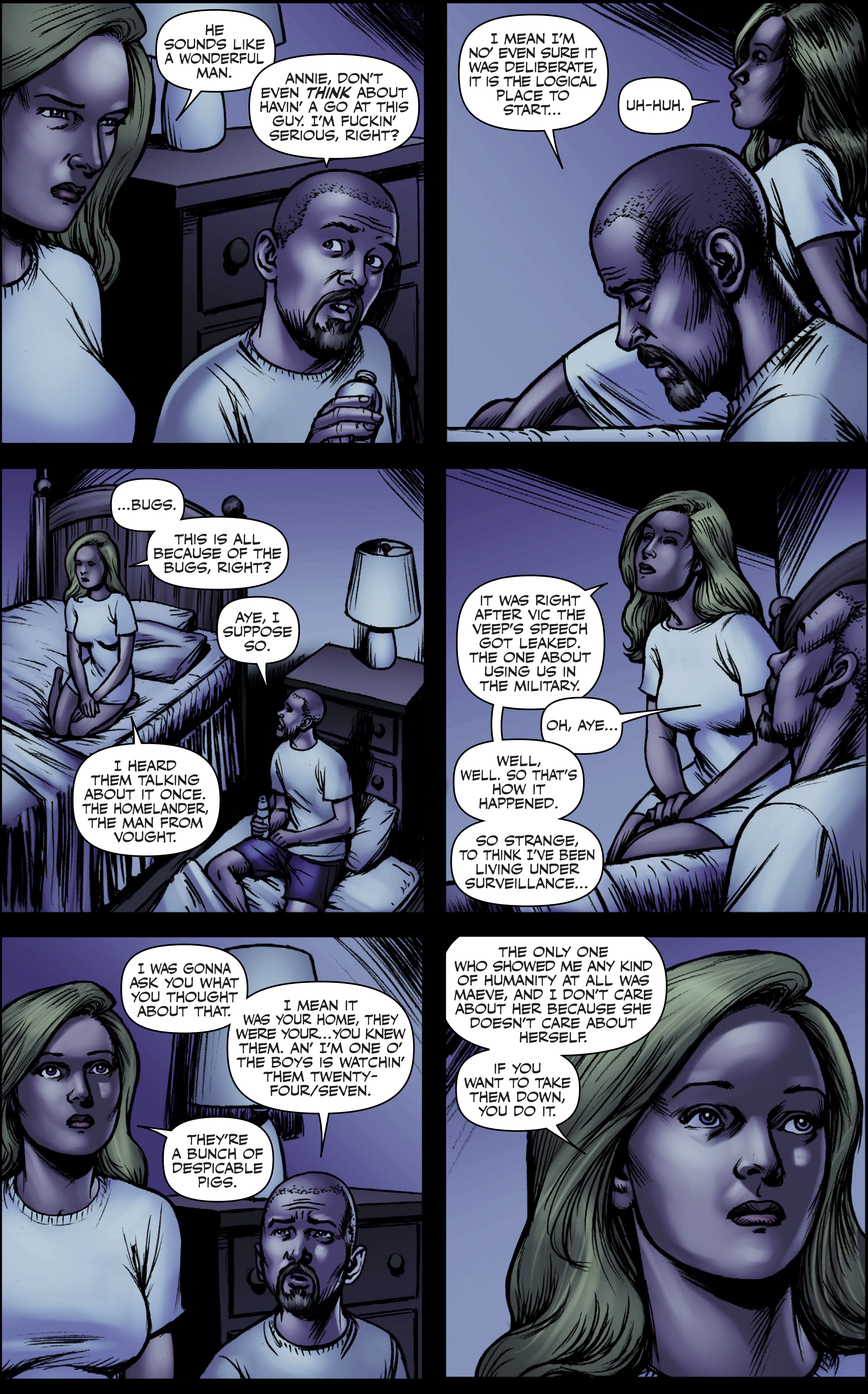

OCH... IT WAS JUST THE GUY...
IN CHARGE...
YOUR BOSS.
YOU GET A LITTLE EDGY WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT HIM.
I'M NO' EDGY, I'M JUST-- FRUSTRATED.
I WANTED TO COME BACK ALL COOL AN' DECISIVE, AN' TELL HIM HOW IT WAS GONNA BE FROM NOW ON. BUT IT WAS LIKE HE JUST INSTANTLY OVERTURNED IT--HE DIDN'T EVEN MEAN TO, HE JUST WALKED OUT THE DOOR WHEN I WAS ABOUT TO WALK IN.
IT'S NO' LIKE HE WAS EXPECTIN' ME, LIKE.
UNLESS HE SAW ME THROUGH THE DOOR WHEN I WAS COMIN' ACROSS FIFTH...
I DUNNO. BUT IF THERE'S ANYONE ACTUALLY ***LIKES*** THE WORLD THE WAY I WAS TALKIN' ABOUT, IT'S HIM.
IT'S STARTIN' TO LOOK LIKE HE DOES EVERYTHING HE CAN TO KEEP IT THAT WAY.
HUH.
THIS IS THE SAME GUY THAT GAVE US OUR LINE--
ABOUT TWO PEOPLE FINDING EACH OTHER?

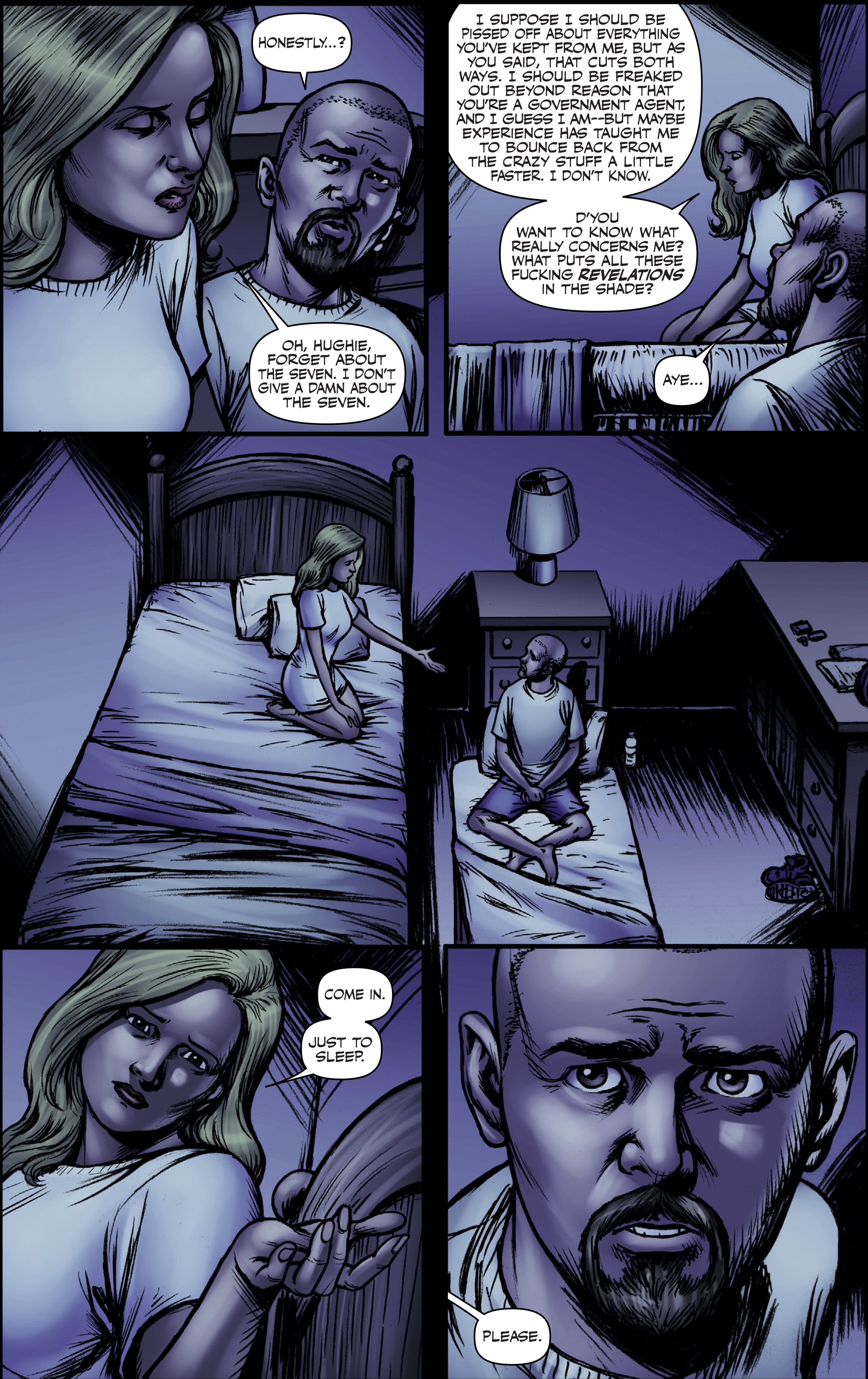

WARF! WARF! WARF! WARF!
MUBBLE?
WARF! WARF! WARF! WARF!
YEAH, ALL RIGHT, MATE, ALL RIGHT... FUCKIN' HELL...
OH.
BOLLOCKS.
00:00
12:00
12:00
ALL RIGHT?
TEN-HUT, TROOPER!
FUCK RIGHT OFF.
SAY, THEY'RE GIVIN' ME A CAMEO IN THE WEBWEAVER PREQUEL...I GET TO SAVE SOME COOZE...
HOW D'YOU DO THAT, D'YOU HAVE TO OPEN AN ACCOUNT OR SOMETHIN'? LISTEN, HAVE YOU HEARD FROM MAEVE?
NO...
BUGS'VE ALL JUST QUIT ON US. NOT SHUT DOWN, LIKE WHEN SHE KILLS THE SIGNAL BEFORE A SWEEP--GONE.

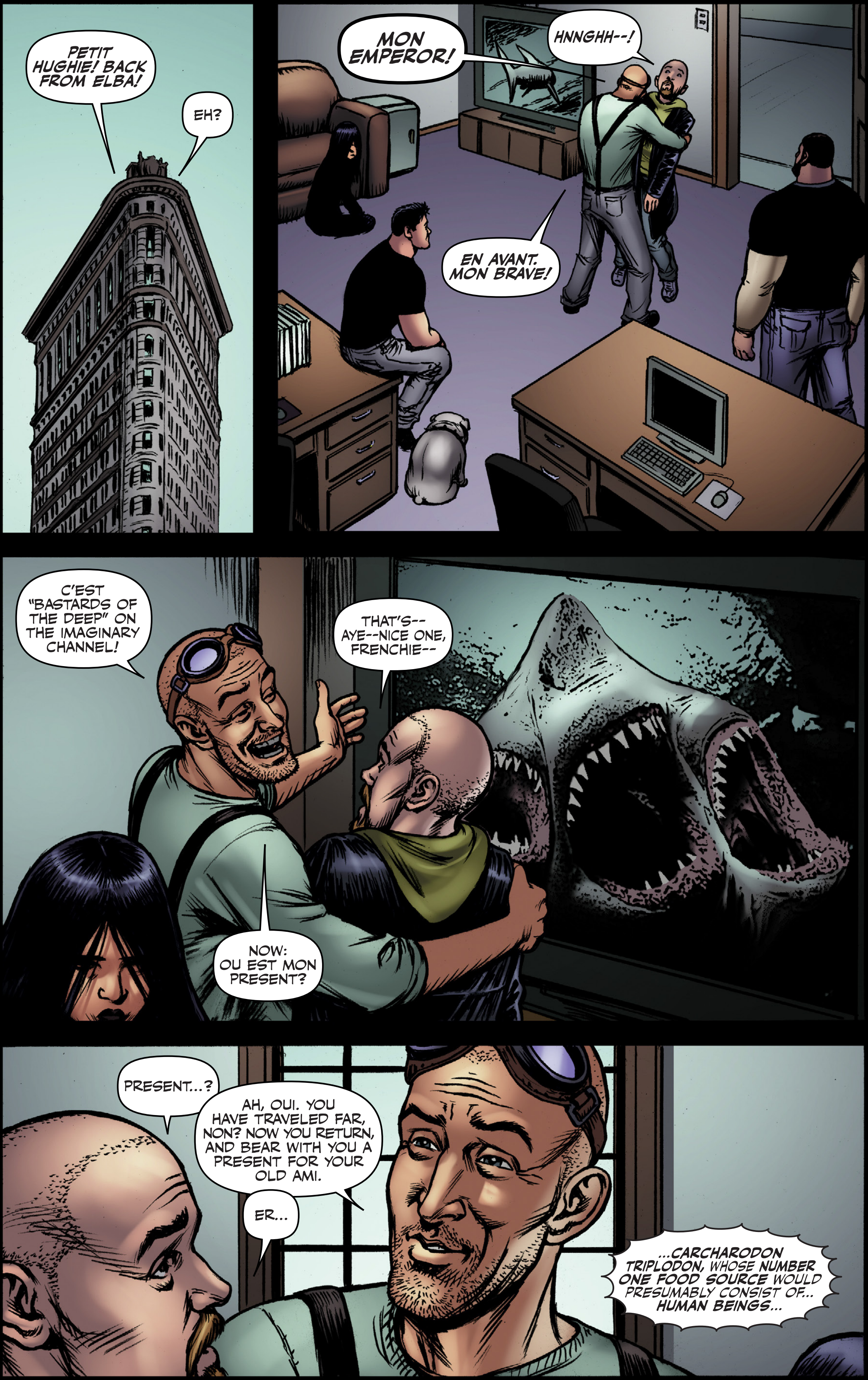

ALL OF 'EM...?
CONFERENCE ROOM, KITCHEN, HOMELANDER'S KHAZI. LOOKS LIKE THEY ALL WENT AT ONCE.
NOW WHAT THE HELL DOES THAT MEAN--?
EITHER THEY WENT ON THE FRITZ AT THE SAME TIME, WHICH IS UNLIKELY, OR SHE WAS TOO PISSED TO REMEMBER THERE WAS A SWEEP COMIN'--
WHICH'D BE A GODDAMN FIRST...
OR THEY GOT HER.
"DO ME A FAVOR AN' FIND OUT WHICH IT IS, EH?"

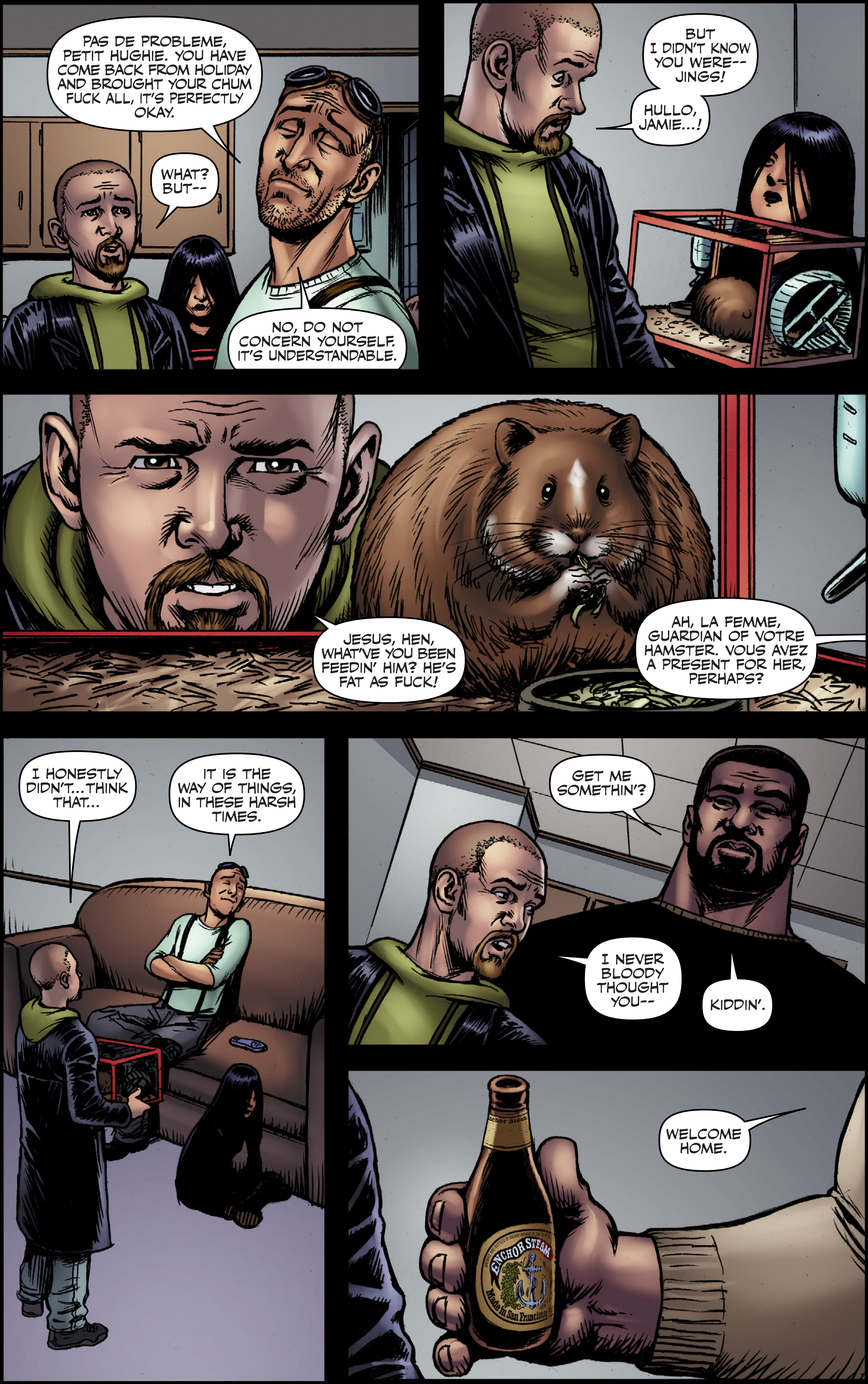

WHY NOT CONFRONT HIM?
YOUR BOSS, WHATSIZNAME...
MM?
HIS NAME I'VE NEVER MENTIONED ONCE, YOU MEAN.
I KNOW, I KNOW. KEEP HER OUT OF THE LOOP, DON'T LET HER GET HER FINGERS BURNT.
BUT IF YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THIS WORLD BEING THE WAY IT IS, IF YOU THINK HE'S ACTUALLY CONTRIBUTING TO IT: WHY DON'T YOU JUST COME OUT AND ASK HIM? ABOUT WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON?
BECAUSE...I'M SCARED TO.
IN CASE ALL THESE WEE SUSPICIONS I'VE GOT TURN OUT TO BE TRUE.
I FEEL LIKE I'VE TURNED OVER ENOUGH STONES RECENTLY. I THOUGHT I WANTED TO KEN ALL ABOUT THE PAST, BUT IT'S JUST GIVEN ME MORE TO WORRY ABOUT.
WELL... FROM WHAT YOU'VE TOLD ME ABOUT THESE GUYS, ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU SHOULD'VE EXPECTED?
AYE. BUT NOW I JUST FEEL LIKE I'D RATHER'VE STAYED IGNORANT.
I DON'T WANT TO PISS YOU OFF HERE, I'M NOT TRYING TO CATCH YOU IN A CONTRADICTION. THIS IS JUST DEVIL'S ADVOCATE.
YOU SAID YOU THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KEEP AN EYE ON THINGS, BUT YOU'RE ALSO AFRAID TO INVESTIGATE THE SITUATION. DOES THAT MEAN YOU WANT TO JUST WAIT AND LET STUFF HAPPEN?
LIKE...FIND OUT THE HARD WAY?
WELL, THAT CERTAINLY SOUNDS LIKE ME, AYE.
KEEP EVERYTHIN' NEAT AN' TIDY, UNTIL IT ALL FALLS APART.

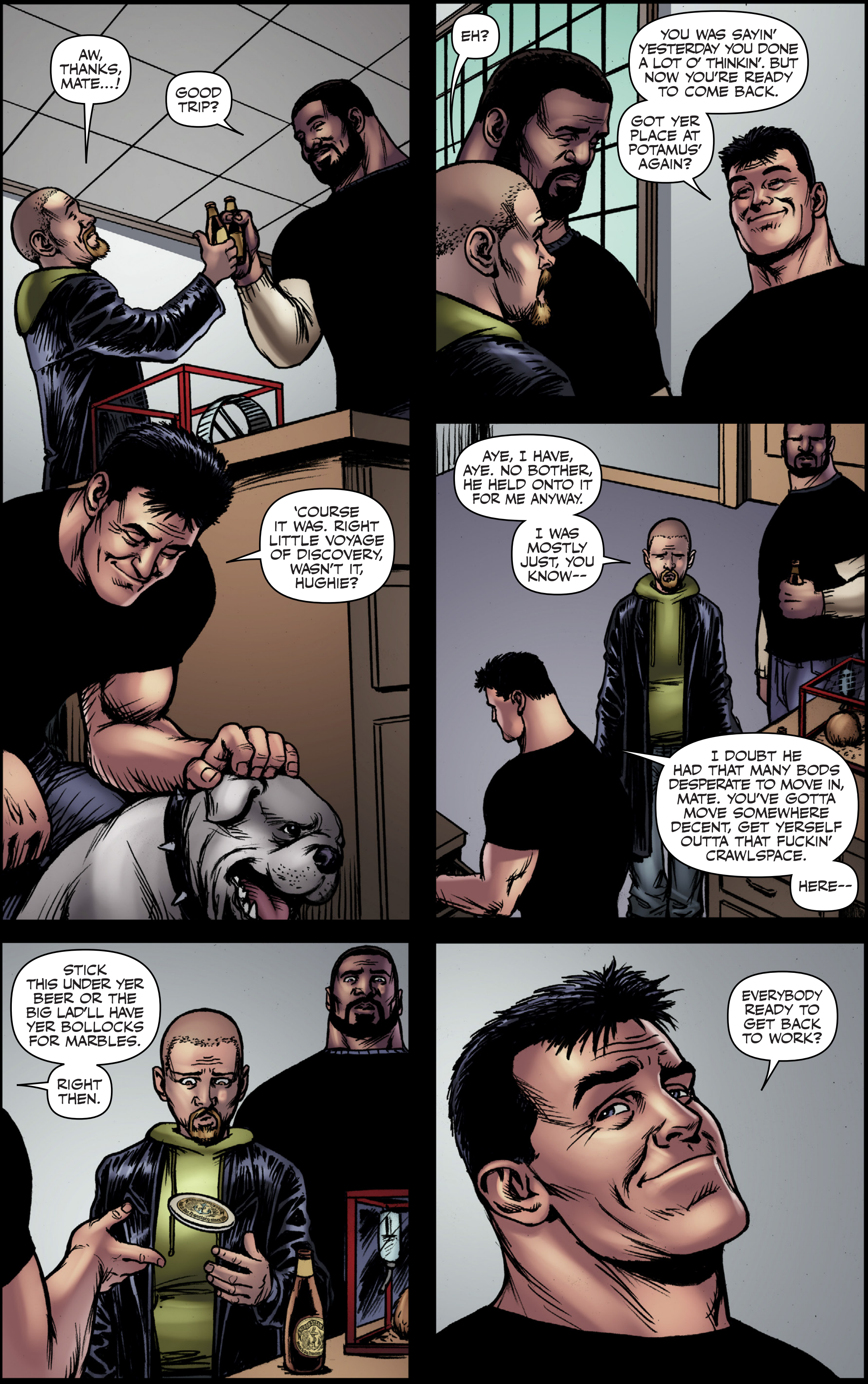

OKAY, HEAD-IN-THE-SAND, TRY THIS: IF YOU DID CALL HIM ON ALL THIS STUFF, WHERE WOULD YOU MAKE A START?
OH, TA.
WHAT D'YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE?
I'D--
NO.
WHAT?
NO, IT'S NO'... I DON'T...
COME ON, WHAT?
HUGHIE, YOU'RE LIKE ME: YOU HAVE NO ONE ELSE TO TALK TO IN THE WORLD.
NOT ABOUT THIS STUFF, ANYWAY. COME ON.
I'M WORRIED...THAT...HE GOT ME TO WATCH THAT TAPE OF YOU, BECAUSE HE KNEW ALL ALONG.
ABOUT US?
NO, I TOLD HIM ABOUT US. JUST AFTER YOU TOLD ME ABOUT YOU.
HE SAID HE WAS WORRIED YOU WERE A SPY, LIKE YOU'D SORTA BEEN ASSIGNED TO ME. HE SAID WORK YOUR WAY THROUGH THE SURVEILLANCE TAPES, SEE IF YOU CAN FIND THEM TALKIN' ABOUT IT.
SO I STARTED A WEE BIT BEFORE WHEN WE MET...AN'...
HE SUGGESTED YOU START THERE, DID HE?
AYE.
AYE, HE DID.

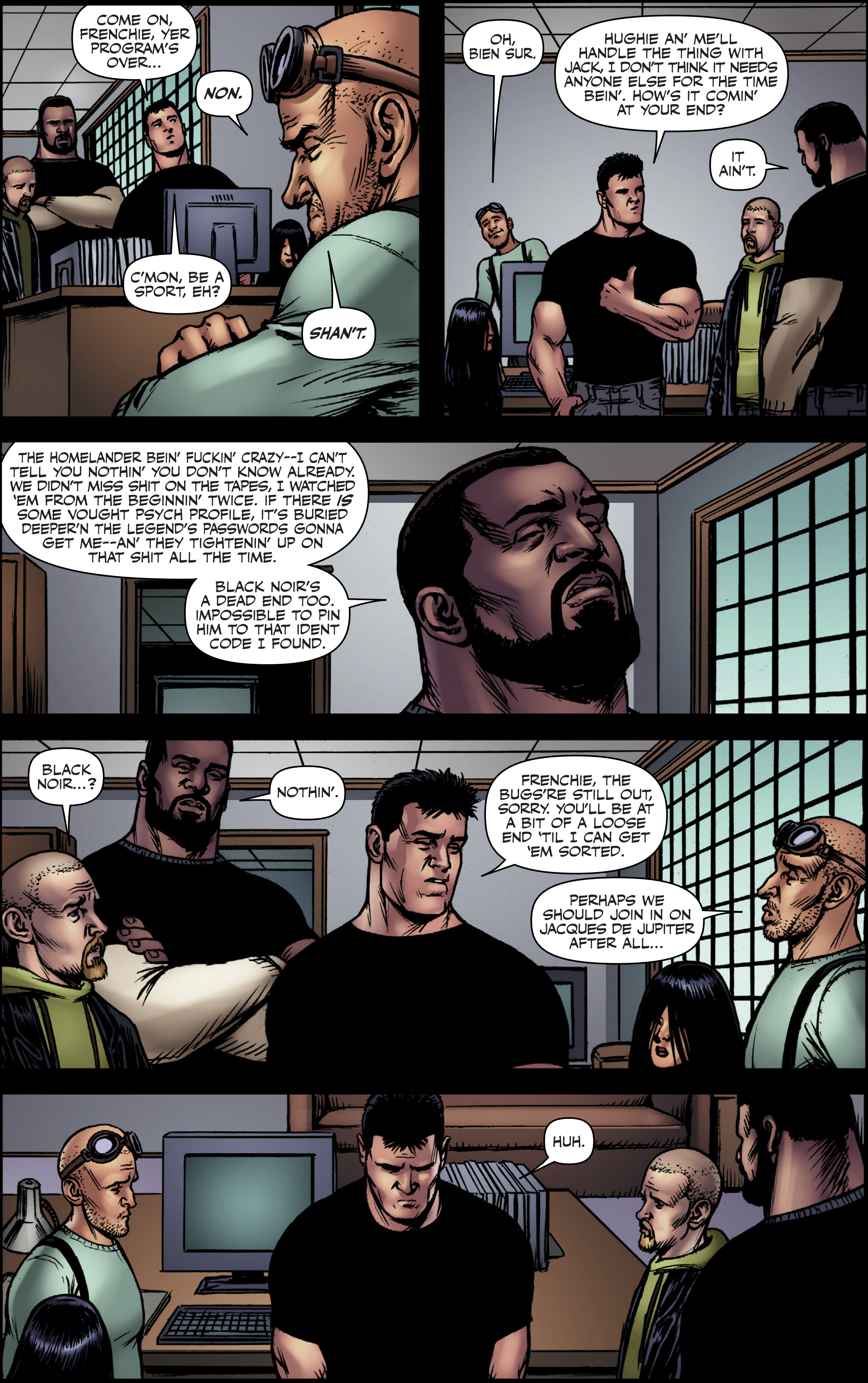

HE SOUNDS LIKE A WONDERFUL MAN.
ANNIE, DON'T EVEN *THINK* ABOUT HAVIN' A GO AT THIS GUY. I'M FUCKIN' SERIOUS, RIGHT?
I MEAN I'M NO' EVEN SURE IT WAS DELIBERATE, IT IS THE LOGICAL PLACE TO START...
UH-HUH.
...BUGS.
THIS IS ALL BECAUSE OF THE BUGS, RIGHT?
AYE, I SUPPOSE SO.
I HEARD THEM TALKING ABOUT IT ONCE. THE HOMELANDER, THE MAN FROM VOUGHT.
IT WAS RIGHT AFTER VIC THE VEEP'S SPEECH GOT LEAKED. THE ONE ABOUT USING US IN THE MILITARY.
OH, AYE...
WELL, WELL. SO THAT'S HOW IT HAPPENED.
SO STRANGE, TO THINK I'VE BEEN LIVING UNDER SURVEILLANCE...
I WAS GONNA ASK YOU WHAT YOU THOUGHT ABOUT THAT.
I MEAN IT WAS YOUR HOME, THEY WERE YOUR...YOU KNEW THEM. AN' I'M ONE O' THE BOYS IS WATCHIN' THEM TWENTY-FOUR/SEVEN.
THEY'RE A BUNCH OF DESPICABLE PIGS.
THE ONLY ONE WHO SHOWED ME ANY KIND OF HUMANITY AT ALL WAS MAEVE, AND I DON'T CARE ABOUT HER BECAUSE SHE DOESN'T CARE ABOUT HERSELF.
IF YOU WANT TO TAKE THEM DOWN, YOU DO IT.

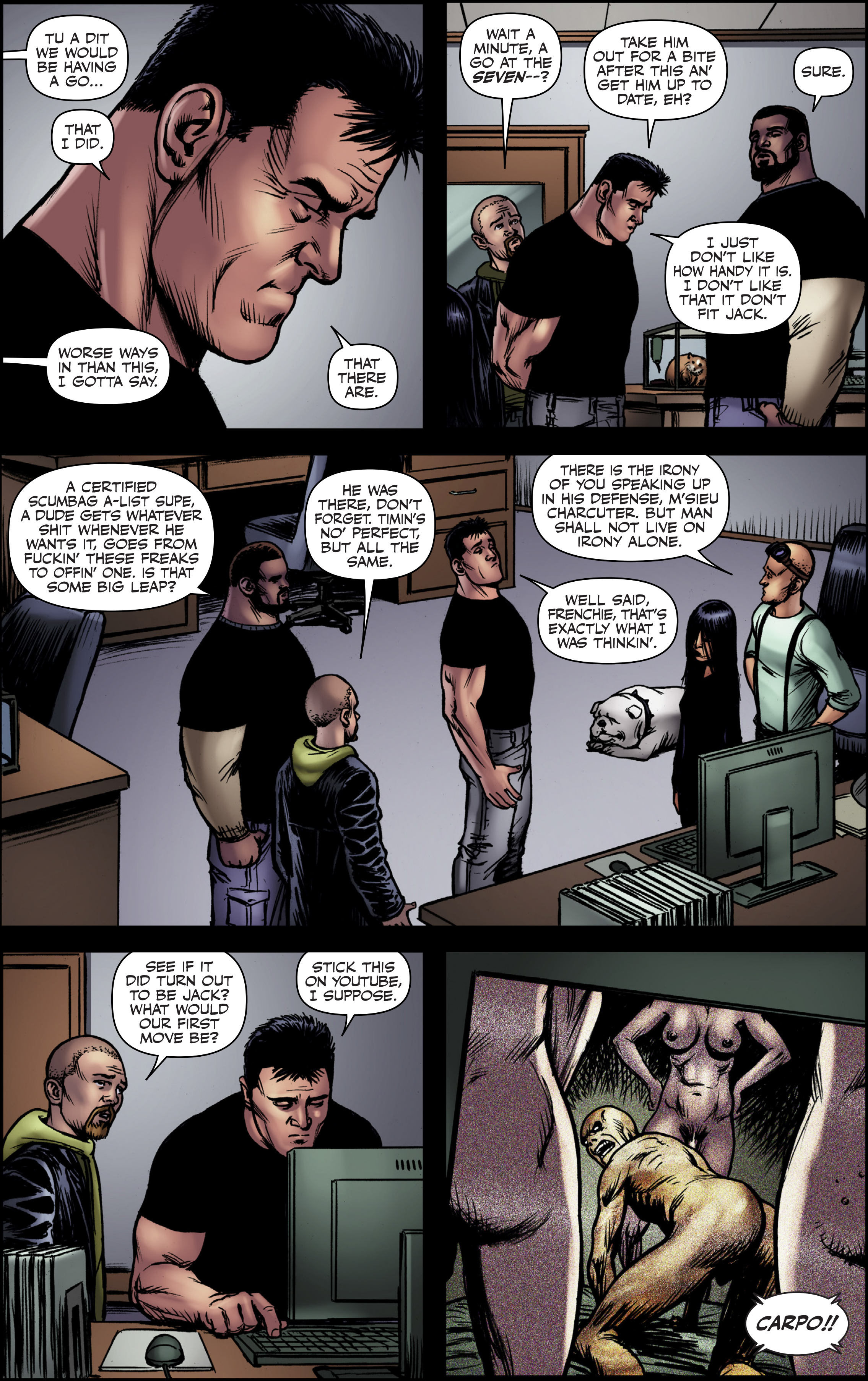

HONESTLY...?
OH, HUGHIE, FORGET ABOUT THE SEVEN. I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THE SEVEN.
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD BE PISSED OFF ABOUT EVERYTHING YOU'VE KEPT FROM ME, BUT AS YOU SAID, THAT CUTS BOTH WAYS. I SHOULD BE FREAKED OUT BEYOND REASON THAT YOU'RE A GOVERNMENT AGENT, AND I GUESS I AM--BUT MAYBE EXPERIENCE HAS TAUGHT ME TO BOUNCE BACK FROM THE CRAZY STUFF A LITTLE FASTER. I DON'T KNOW.
D'YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT REALLY CONCERNS ME? WHAT PUTS ALL THESE FUCKING ***REVELATIONS*** IN THE SHADE?
AYE...
COME IN.
JUST TO SLEEP.
PLEASE.

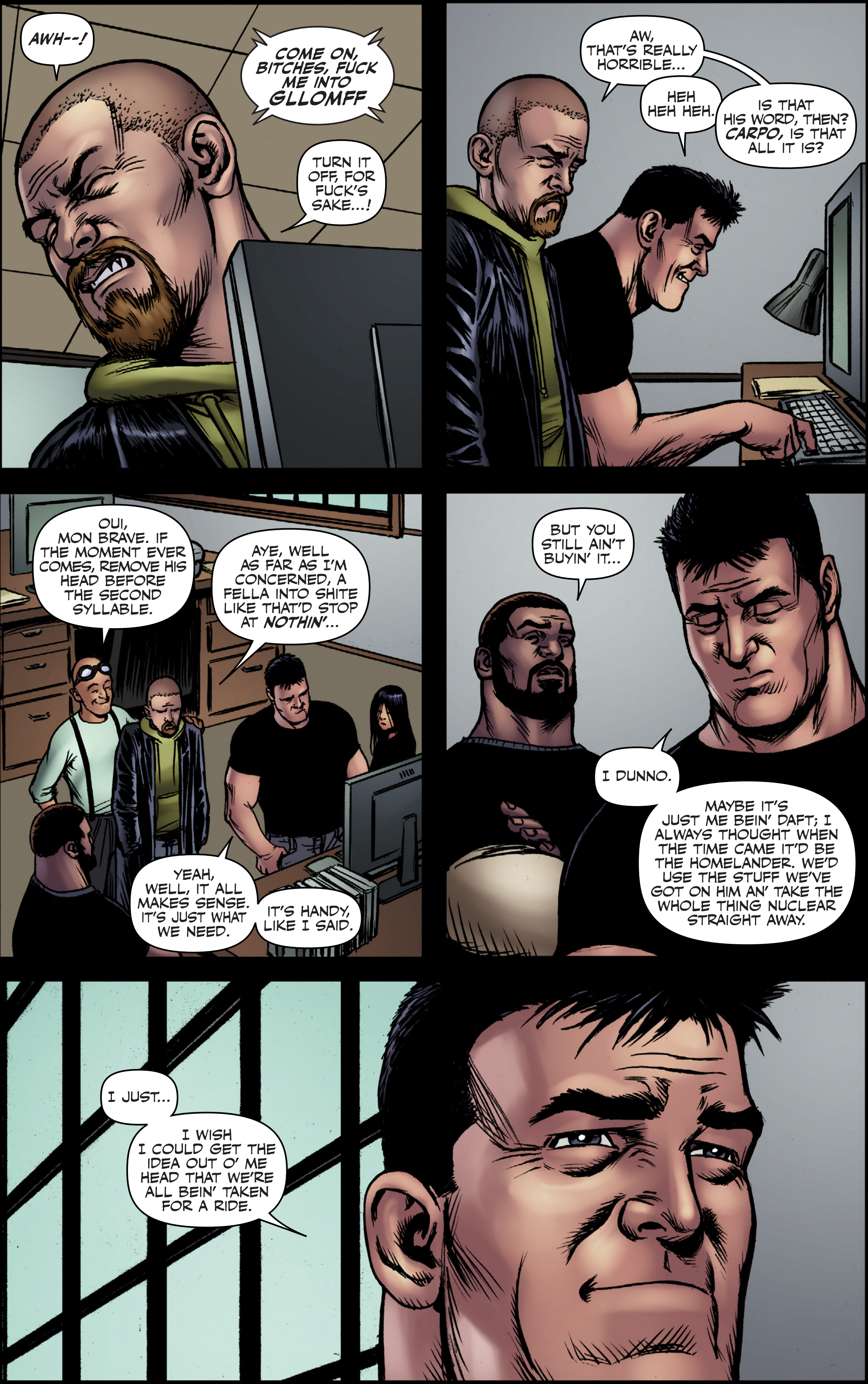

PETIT HUGHIE! BACK FROM ELBA!
EH?
MON EMPEROR!
HNNGHH--!
EN AVANT. MON BRAVE!
C'EST "BASTARDS OF THE DEEP" ON THE IMAGINARY CHANNEL!
THAT'S-- AYE--NICE ONE, FRENCHIE--
NOW: OU EST MON PRESENT?
PRESENT...?
AH, OUI. YOU HAVE TRAVELED FAR, NON? NOW YOU RETURN, AND BEAR WITH YOU A PRESENT FOR YOUR OLD AMI.
ER...
...CARCHARODON TRIPLODON, WHOSE NUMBER ONE FOOD SOURCE WOULD PRESUMABLY CONSIST OF... HUMAN BEINGS...

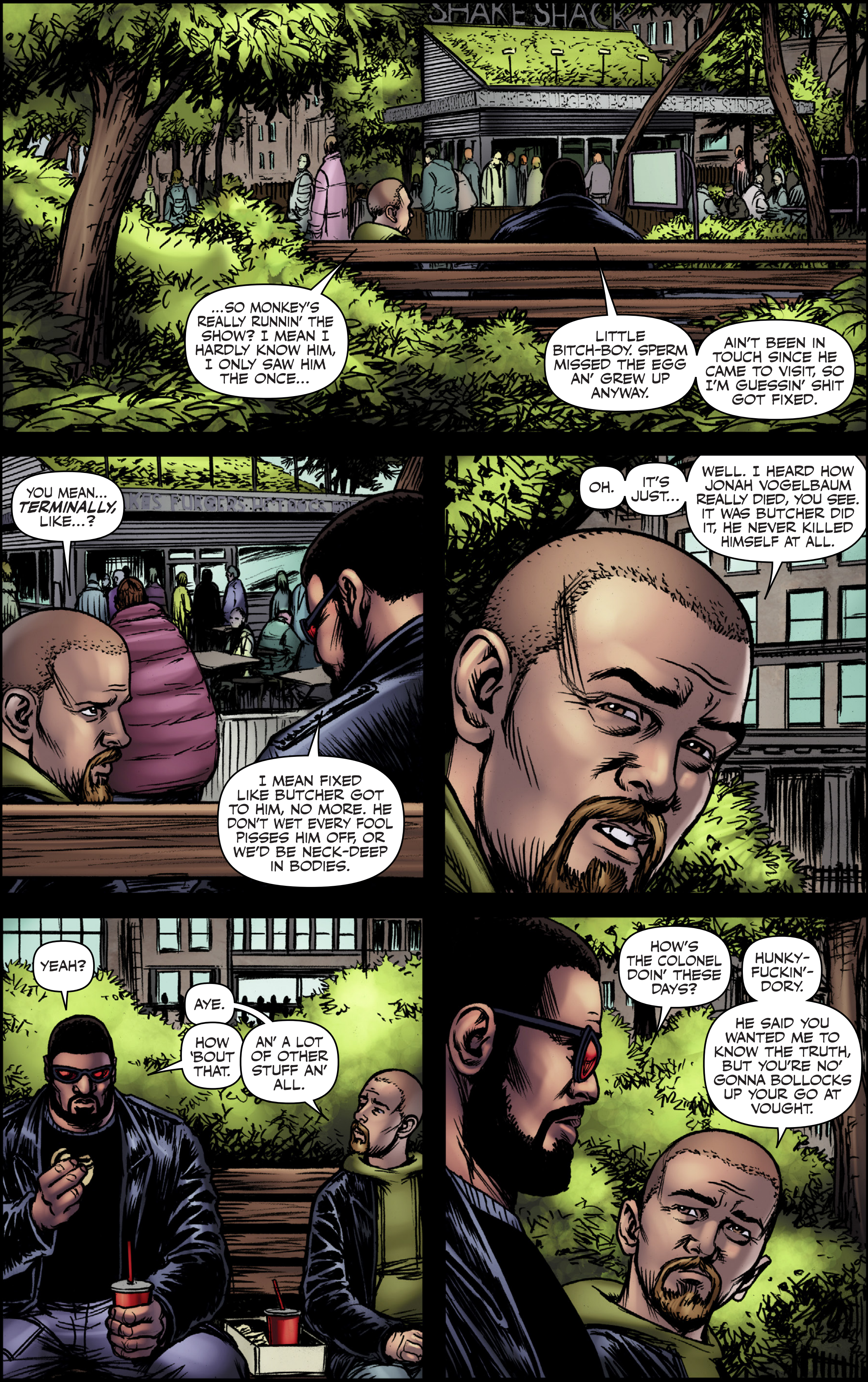

PAS DE PROBLEME, PETIT HUGHIE. YOU HAVE COME BACK FROM HOLIDAY AND BROUGHT YOUR CHUM FUCK ALL, IT'S PERFECTLY OKAY.
WHAT? BUT--
NO, DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF. IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE.
BUT I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE-- JINGS!
HULLO, JAMIE...!
JESUS, HEN, WHAT'VE YOU BEEN FEEDIN' HIM? HE'S FAT AS FUCK!
AH, LA FEMME, GUARDIAN OF VOTRE HAMSTER. VOUS AVEZ A PRESENT FOR HER, PERHAPS?
I HONESTLY DIDN'T...THINK THAT...
IT IS THE WAY OF THINGS, IN THESE HARSH TIMES.
GET ME SOMETHIN'?
I NEVER BLOODY THOUGHT YOU--
KIDDIN'.
ANCHOR STEAM
Made in San Francisco
WELCOME HOME.

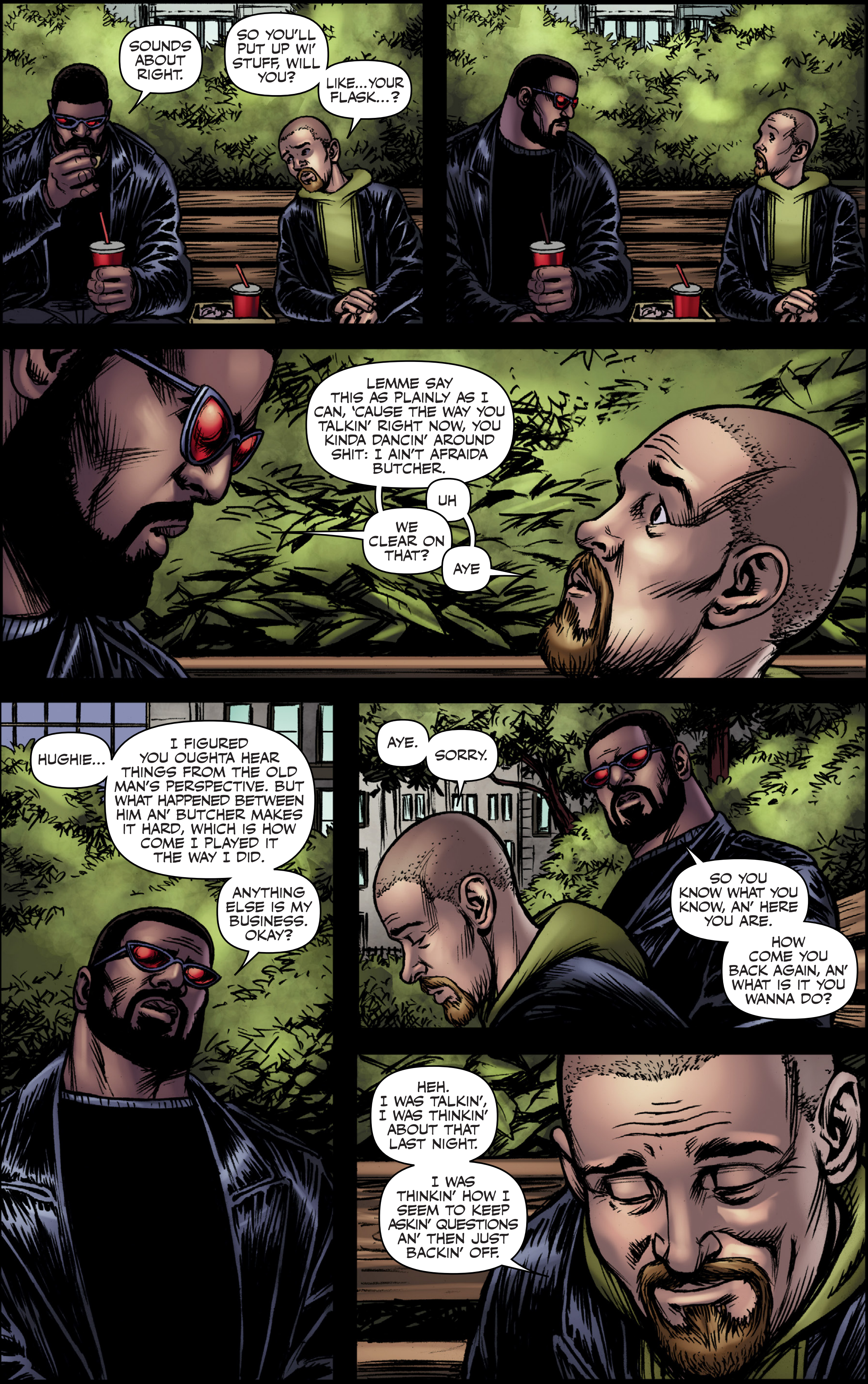

AW, THANKS, MATE...!
GOOD TRIP?
'COURSE IT WAS. RIGHT LITTLE VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY, WASN'T IT, HUGHIE?
EH?
YOU WAS SAYIN' YESTERDAY YOU DONE A LOT O' THINKIN'. BUT NOW YOU'RE READY TO COME BACK.
GOT YER PLACE AT POTAMUS' AGAIN?
AYE, I HAVE, AYE. NO BOTHER, HE HELD ONTO IT FOR ME ANYWAY.
I WAS MOSTLY JUST, YOU KNOW--
I DOUBT HE HAD THAT MANY BODS DESPERATE TO MOVE IN, MATE. YOU'VE GOTTA MOVE SOMEWHERE DECENT, GET YERSELF OUTTA THAT FUCKIN' CRAWLSPACE.
HERE--
STICK THIS UNDER YER BEER OR THE BIG LAD'LL HAVE YER BOLLOCKS FOR MARBLES.
RIGHT THEN.
EVERYBODY READY TO GET BACK TO WORK?

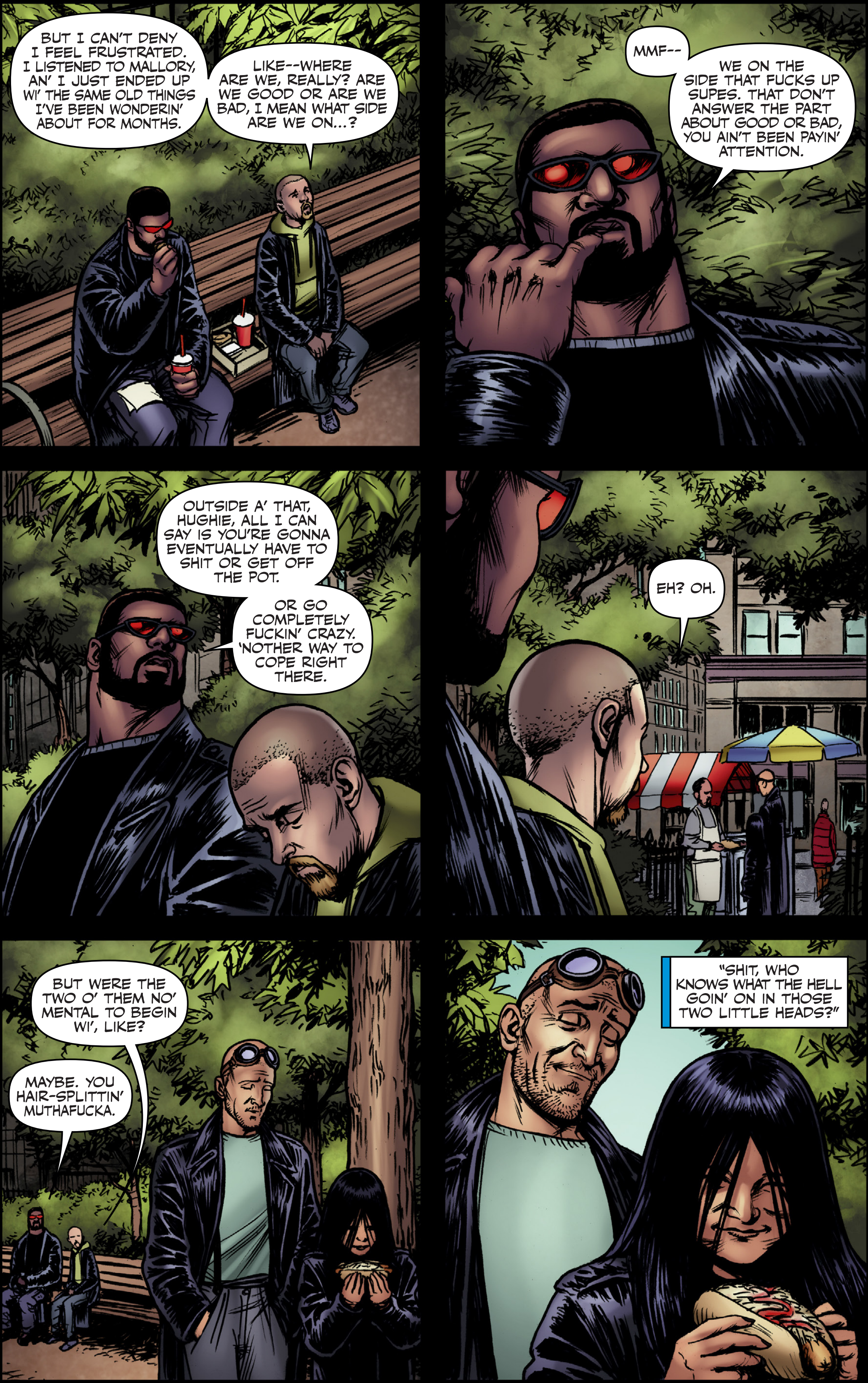

COME ON, FRENCHIE, YER PROGRAM'S OVER...
NON.
C'MON, BE A SPORT, EH?
SHAN'T.
OH, BIEN SUR.
HUGHIE AN' ME'LL HANDLE THE THING WITH JACK, I DON'T THINK IT NEEDS ANYONE ELSE FOR THE TIME BEIN'. HOW'S IT COMIN' AT YOUR END?
IT AIN'T.
THE HOMELANDER BEIN' FUCKIN' CRAZY--I CAN'T TELL YOU NOTHIN' YOU DON'T KNOW ALREADY. WE DIDN'T MISS SHIT ON THE TAPES, I WATCHED 'EM FROM THE BEGINNIN' TWICE. IF THERE *IS* SOME VOUGHT PSYCH PROFILE, IT'S BURIED DEEPER'N THE LEGEND'S PASSWORDS GONNA GET ME--AN' THEY TIGHTENIN' UP ON THAT SHIT ALL THE TIME.
BLACK NOIR'S A DEAD END TOO. IMPOSSIBLE TO PIN HIM TO THAT IDENT CODE I FOUND.
BLACK NOIR...?
NOTHIN'.
FRENCHIE, THE BUGS'RE STILL OUT, SORRY. YOU'LL BE AT A BIT OF A LOOSE END 'TIL I CAN GET 'EM SORTED.
PERHAPS WE SHOULD JOIN IN ON JACQUES DE JUPITER AFTER ALL...
HUH.

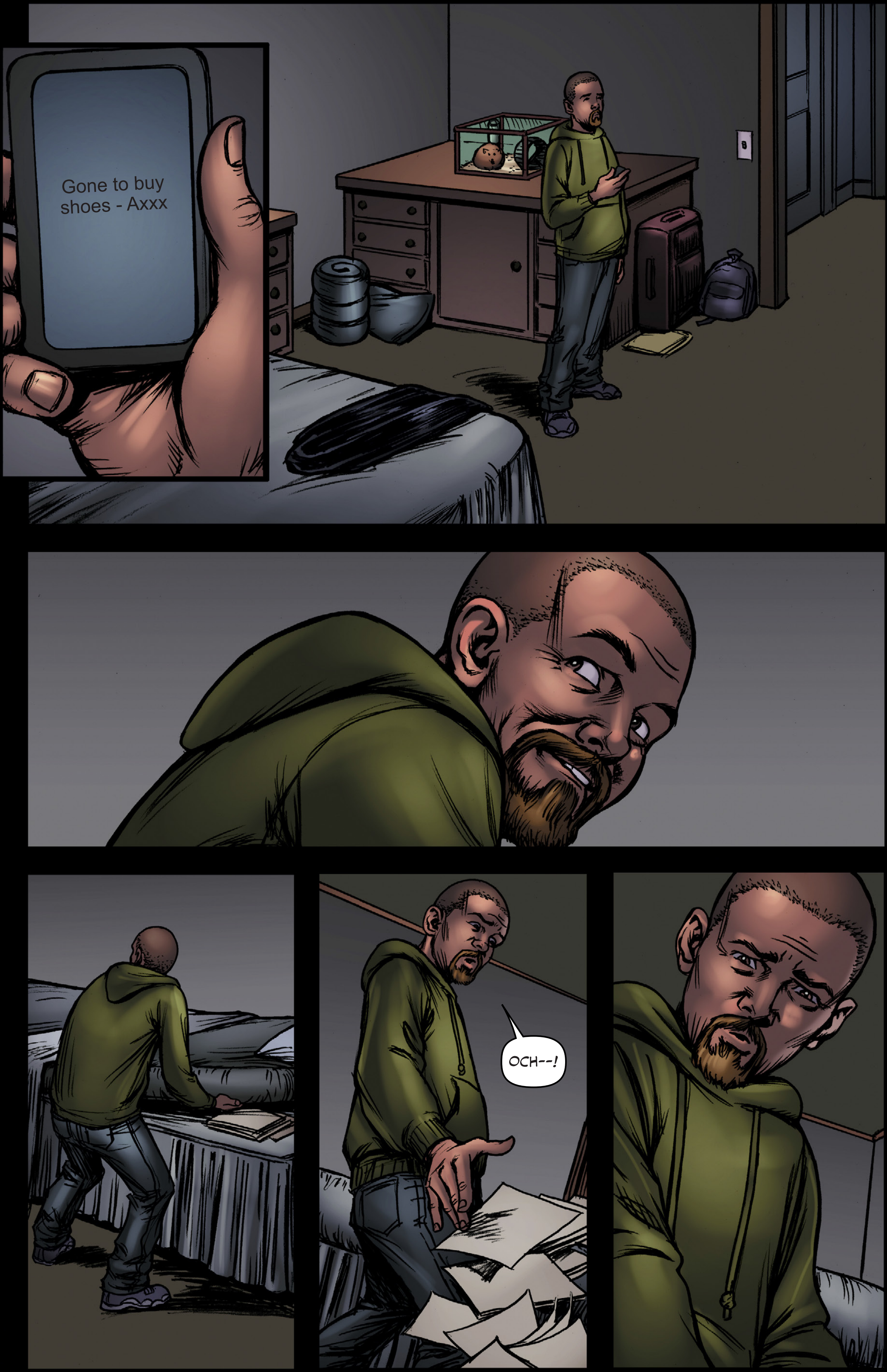

TU A DIT WE WOULD BE HAVING A GO...
THAT I DID.
WORSE WAYS IN THAN THIS, I GOTTA SAY.
THAT THERE ARE.
WAIT A MINUTE, A GO AT THE *SEVEN*--?
TAKE HIM OUT FOR A BITE AFTER THIS AN' GET HIM UP TO DATE, EH?
SURE.
I JUST DON'T LIKE HOW HANDY IT IS. I DON'T LIKE THAT IT DON'T FIT JACK.
A CERTIFIED SCUMBAG A-LIST SUPE, A DUDE GETS WHATEVER SHIT WHENEVER HE WANTS IT, GOES FROM FUCKIN' THESE FREAKS TO OFFIN' ONE. IS THAT SOME BIG LEAP?
HE WAS THERE, DON'T FORGET. TIMIN'S NO' PERFECT, BUT ALL THE SAME.
THERE IS THE IRONY OF YOU SPEAKING UP IN HIS DEFENSE, M'SIEU CHARCUTER. BUT MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON IRONY ALONE.
WELL SAID, FRENCHIE, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I WAS THINKIN'.
SEE IF IT DID TURN OUT TO BE JACK? WHAT WOULD OUR FIRST MOVE BE?
STICK THIS ON YOUTUBE, I SUPPOSE.
CARPO!!

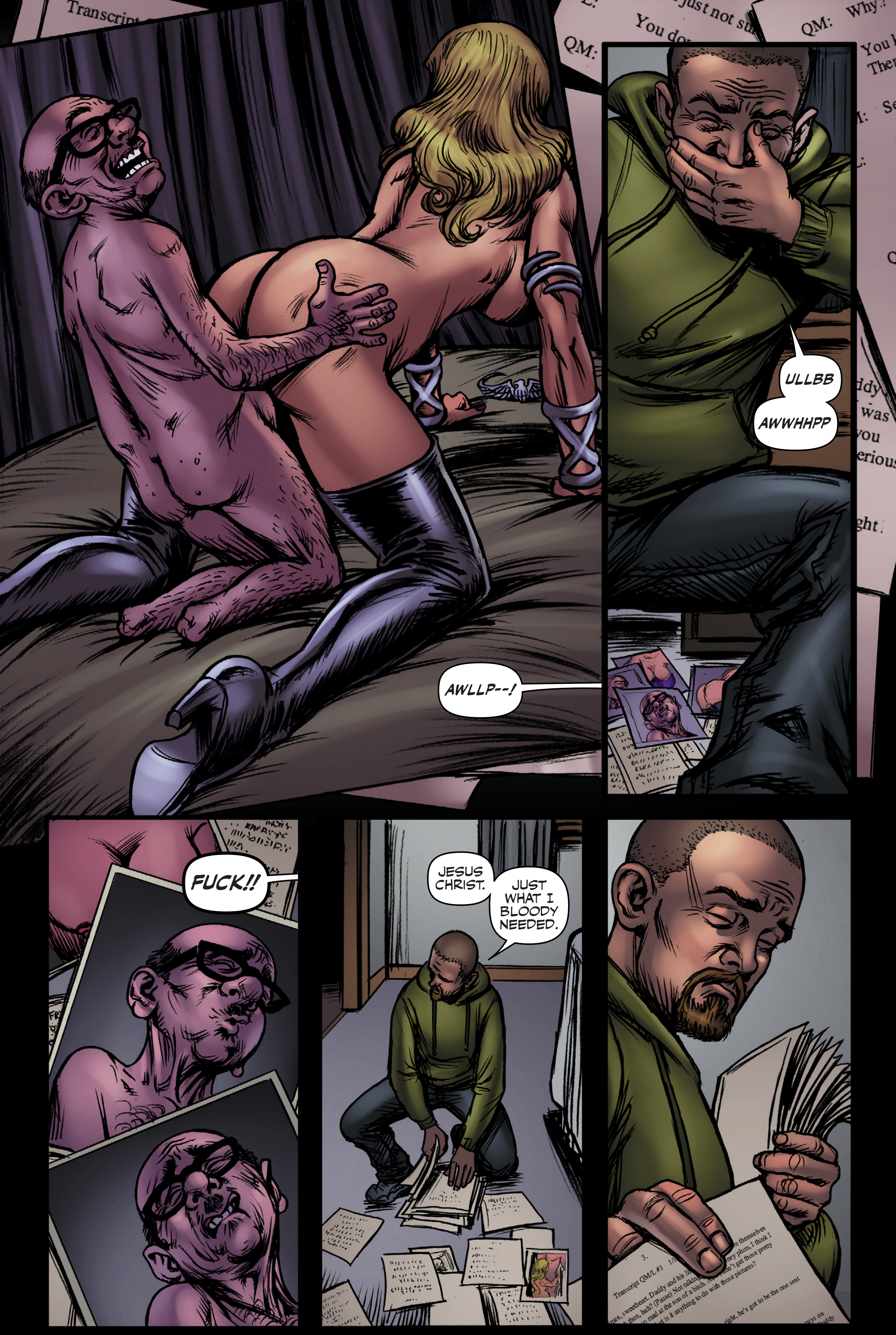

AWH--!
COME ON, BITCHES, FUCK ME INTO GLLOMFF
TURN IT OFF, FOR FUCK'S SAKE...!
AW, THAT'S REALLY HORRIBLE...
HEH HEH HEH.
IS THAT HIS WORD, THEN? CARPO, IS THAT ALL IT IS?
OUI, MON BRAVE. IF THE MOMENT EVER COMES, REMOVE HIS HEAD BEFORE THE SECOND SYLLABLE.
AYE, WELL AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, A FELLA INTO SHITE LIKE THAT'D STOP AT NOTHIN'...
YEAH, WELL, IT ALL MAKES SENSE. IT'S JUST WHAT WE NEED.
IT'S HANDY, LIKE I SAID.
BUT YOU STILL AIN'T BUYIN' IT...
I DUNNO.
MAYBE IT'S JUST ME BEIN' DAFT; I ALWAYS THOUGHT WHEN THE TIME CAME IT'D BE THE HOMELANDER. WE'D USE THE STUFF WE'VE GOT ON HIM AN' TAKE THE WHOLE THING NUCLEAR STRAIGHT AWAY.
I JUST...
I WISH I COULD GET THE IDEA OUT O' ME HEAD THAT WE'RE ALL BEIN' TAKEN FOR A RIDE.

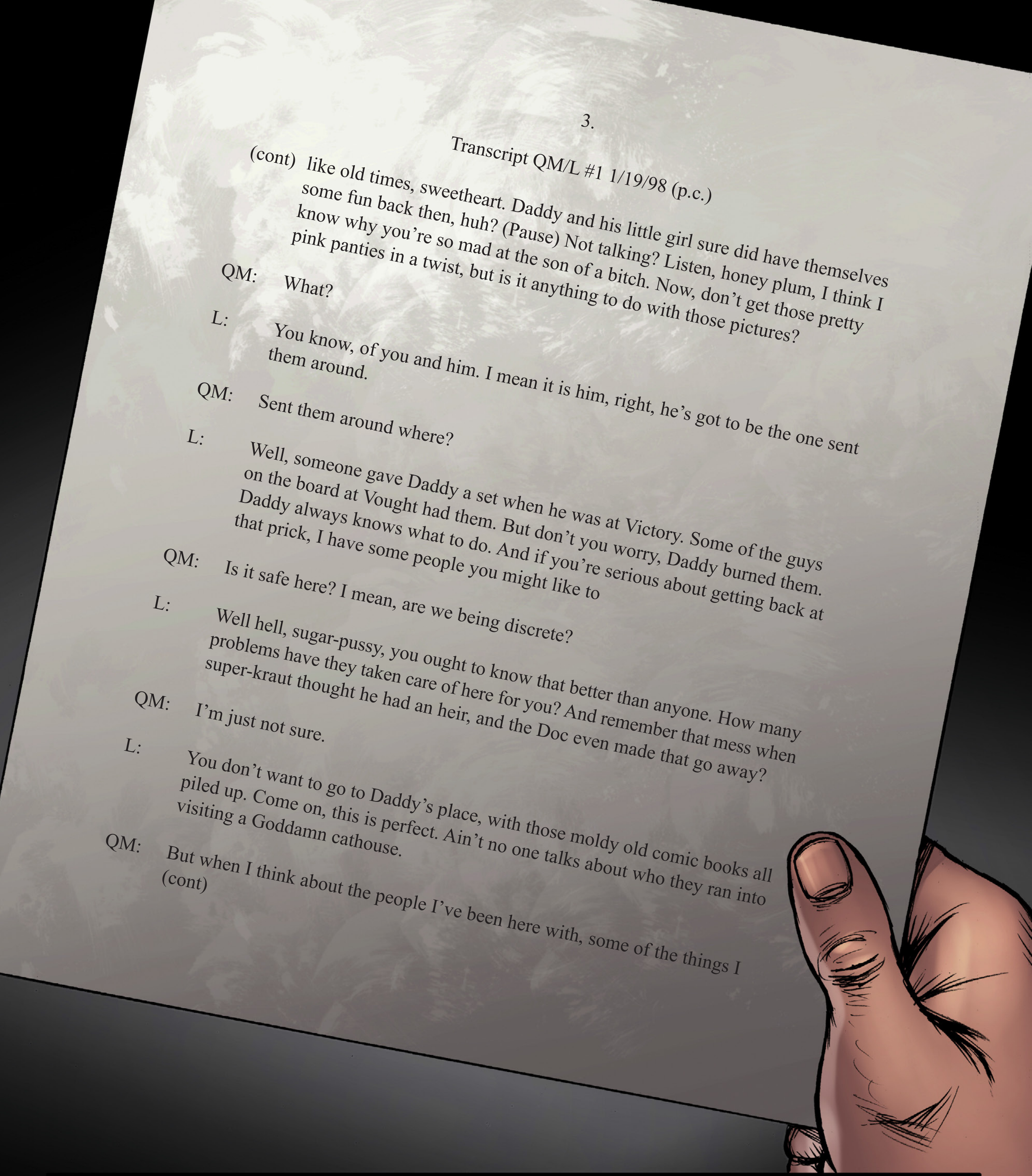

SHAKE SHACK
...SO MONKEY'S REALLY RUNNIN' THE SHOW? I MEAN I HARDLY KNOW HIM, I ONLY SAW HIM THE ONCE...
LITTLE BITCH-BOY. SPERM MISSED THE EGG AN' GREW UP ANYWAY.
AIN'T BEEN IN TOUCH SINCE HE CAME TO VISIT, SO I'M GUESSIN' SHIT GOT FIXED.
YOU MEAN... *TERMINALLY,* LIKE...?
I MEAN FIXED LIKE BUTCHER GOT TO HIM, NO MORE. HE DON'T WET EVERY FOOL PISSES HIM OFF, OR WE'D BE NECK-DEEP IN BODIES.
OH.
IT'S JUST...
WELL. I HEARD HOW JONAH VOGELBAUM REALLY DIED, YOU SEE. IT WAS BUTCHER DID IT, HE NEVER KILLED HIMSELF AT ALL.
YEAH?
AYE.
HOW 'BOUT THAT.
AN' A LOT OF OTHER STUFF AN' ALL.
HOW'S THE COLONEL DOIN' THESE DAYS?
HUNKY-FUCKIN'-DORY.
HE SAID YOU WANTED ME TO KNOW THE TRUTH, BUT YOU'RE NO' GONNA BOLLOCKS UP YOUR GO AT VOUGHT.


SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT.
SO YOU'LL PUT UP WI' STUFF, WILL YOU?
LIKE...YOUR FLASK...?
LEMME SAY THIS AS PLAINLY AS I CAN, 'CAUSE THE WAY YOU TALKIN' RIGHT NOW, YOU KINDA DANCIN' AROUND SHIT: I AIN'T AFRAIDA BUTCHER.
UH
WE CLEAR ON THAT?
AYE
HUGHIE...
I FIGURED YOU OUGHTA HEAR THINGS FROM THE OLD MAN'S PERSPECTIVE. BUT WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN HIM AN' BUTCHER MAKES IT HARD, WHICH IS HOW COME I PLAYED IT THE WAY I DID.
ANYTHING ELSE IS MY BUSINESS. OKAY?
AYE.
SORRY.
SO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU KNOW, AN' HERE YOU ARE.
HOW COME YOU BACK AGAIN, AN' WHAT IS IT YOU WANNA DO?
HEH. I WAS TALKIN', I WAS THINKIN' ABOUT THAT LAST NIGHT.
I WAS THINKIN' HOW I SEEM TO KEEP ASKIN' QUESTIONS AN' THEN JUST BACKIN' OFF.


BUT I CAN'T DENY I FEEL FRUSTRATED. I LISTENED TO MALLORY, AN' I JUST ENDED UP WI' THE SAME OLD THINGS I'VE BEEN WONDERIN' ABOUT FOR MONTHS.
LIKE--WHERE ARE WE, REALLY? ARE WE GOOD OR ARE WE BAD, I MEAN WHAT SIDE ARE WE ON...?
MMF--
WE ON THE SIDE THAT FUCKS UP SUPES. THAT DON'T ANSWER THE PART ABOUT GOOD OR BAD, YOU AIN'T BEEN PAYIN' ATTENTION.
OUTSIDE A' THAT, HUGHIE, ALL I CAN SAY IS YOU'RE GONNA EVENTUALLY HAVE TO SHIT OR GET OFF THE POT.
OR GO COMPLETELY FUCKIN' CRAZY. 'NOTHER WAY TO COPE RIGHT THERE.
EH? OH.
BUT WERE THE TWO O' THEM NO' MENTAL TO BEGIN WI', LIKE?
MAYBE. YOU HAIR-SPLITTIN' MUTHAFUCKA.
"SHIT, WHO KNOWS WHAT THE HELL GOIN' ON IN THOSE TWO LITTLE HEADS?"


Gone to buy shoes - Axxx
OCH--!


ULLBB
AWWHHPP
AWLLP--!
FUCK!!
JESUS CHRIST.
JUST WHAT I BLOODY NEEDED.



3.

Transcript QM/L #1 1/19/98 (p.c.)

(cont) like old times, sweetheart. Daddy and his little girl sure did have themselves some fun back then, huh? (Pause) Not talking? Listen, honey plum, I think I know why you're so mad at the son of a bitch. Now, don't get those pretty pink panties in a twist, but is it anything to do with those pictures?

QM: What?

L: You know, of you and him. I mean it is him, right, he's got to be the one sent them around.

QM: Sent them around where?

L: Well, someone gave Daddy a set when he was at Victory. Some of the guys on the board at Vought had them. But don't you worry, Daddy burned them. Daddy always knows what to do. And if you're serious about getting back at that prick, I have some people you might like to

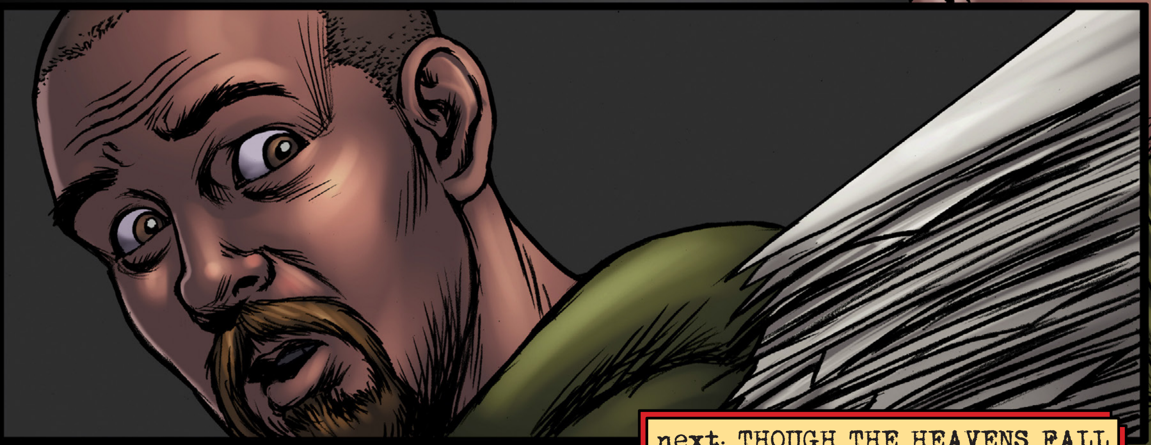
QM: Is it safe here? I mean, are we being discrete?

L: Well hell, sugar-pussy, you ought to know that better than anyone. How many problems have they taken care of here for you? And remember that mess when super-kraut thought he had an heir, and the Doc even made that go away?

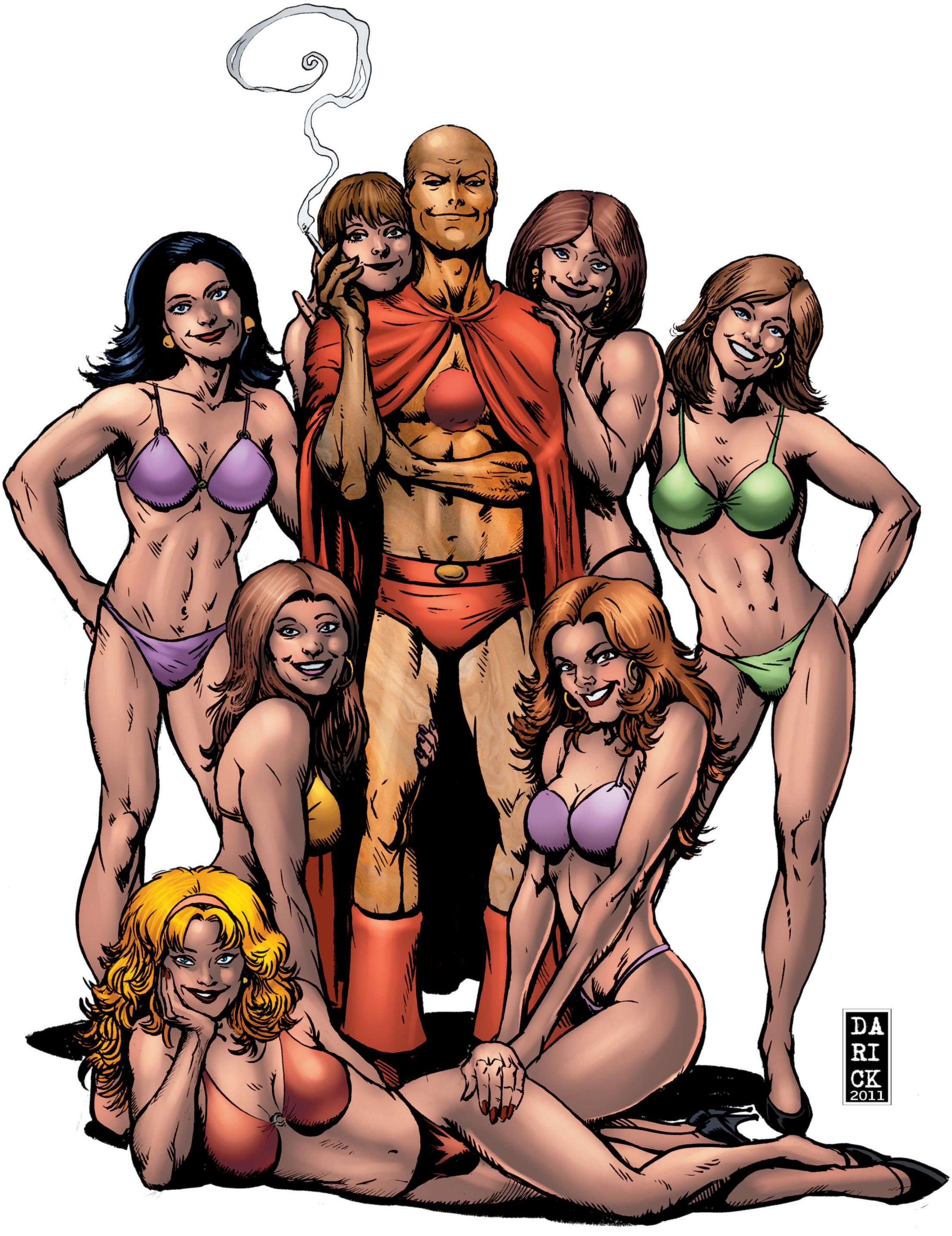
QM: I'm just not sure.

L: You don't want to go to Daddy's place, with those moldy old comic books all piled up. Come on, this is perfect. Ain't no one talks about who they ran into visiting a Goddamn cathouse.

QM: But when I think about the people I've been here with, some of the things I (cont)


next: THOUGH THE HEAVENS FALL

FIFTY-EIGHT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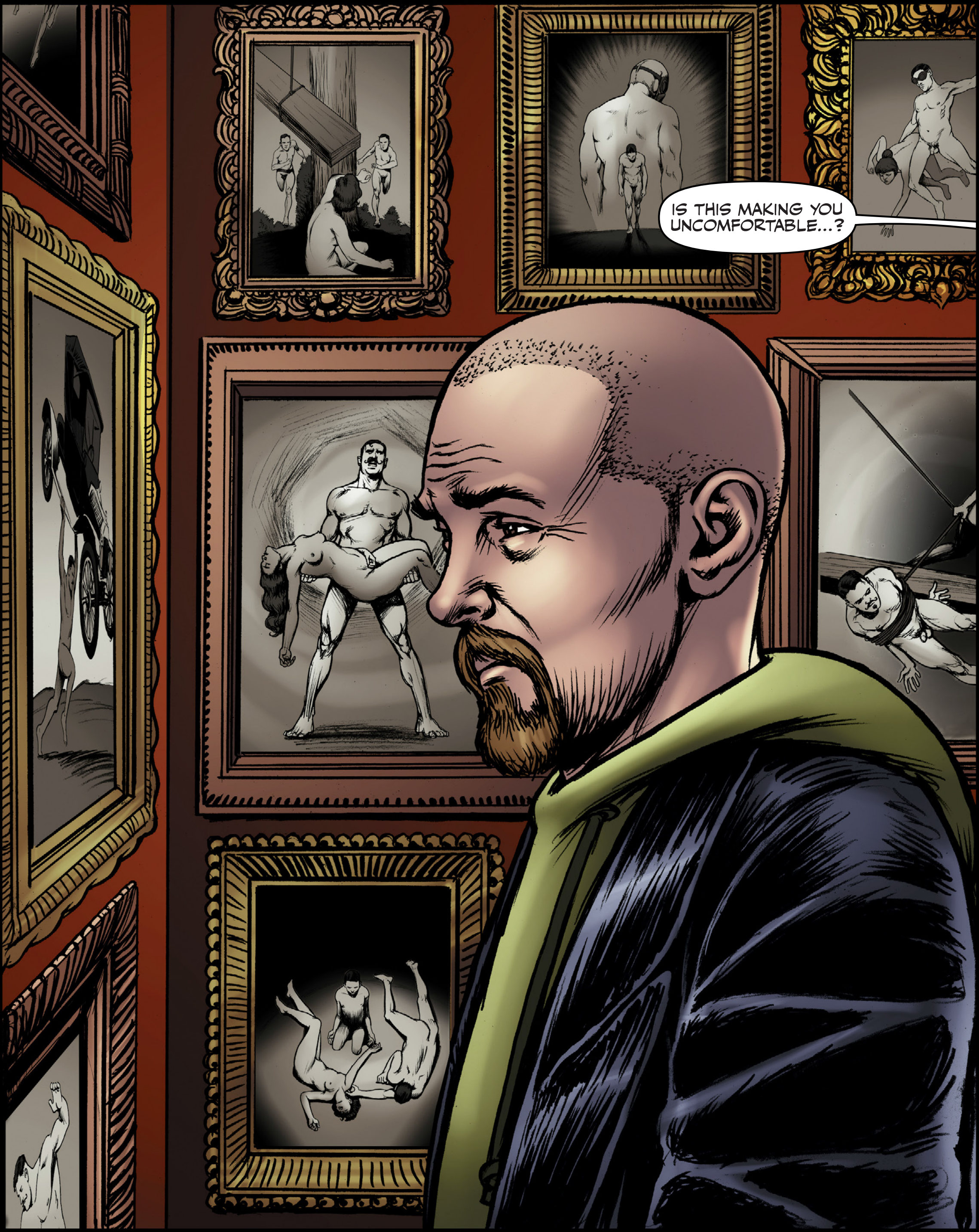
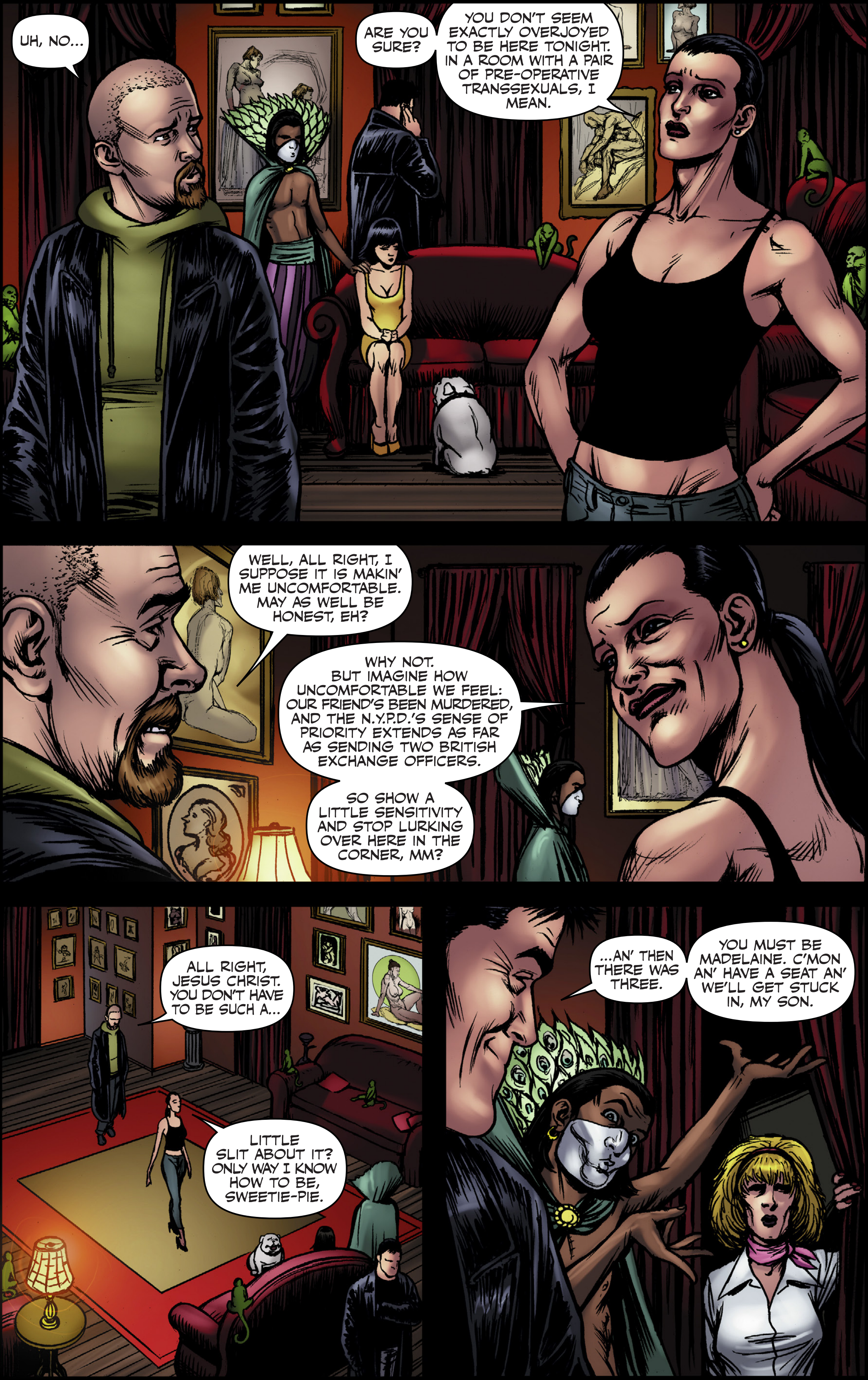
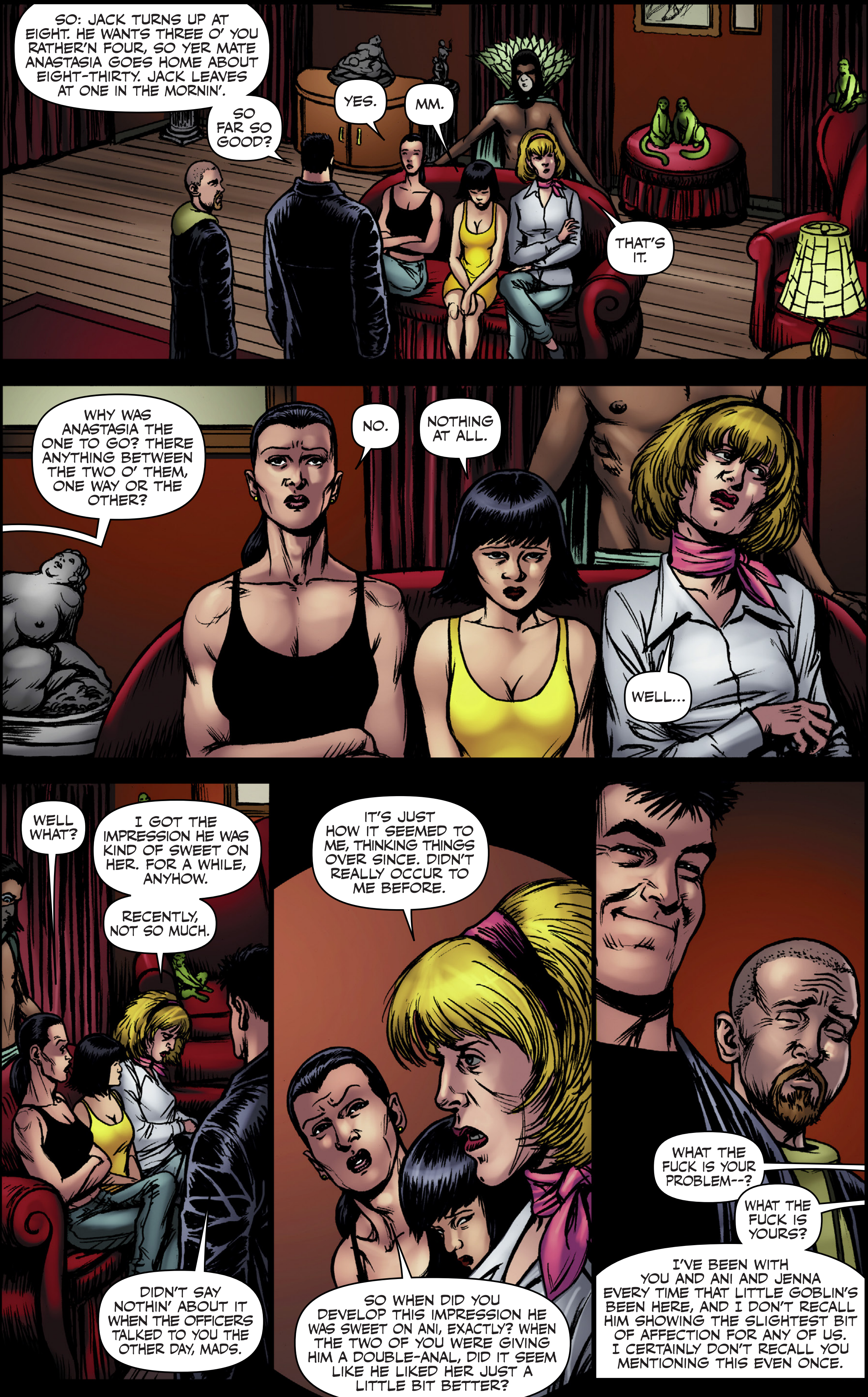
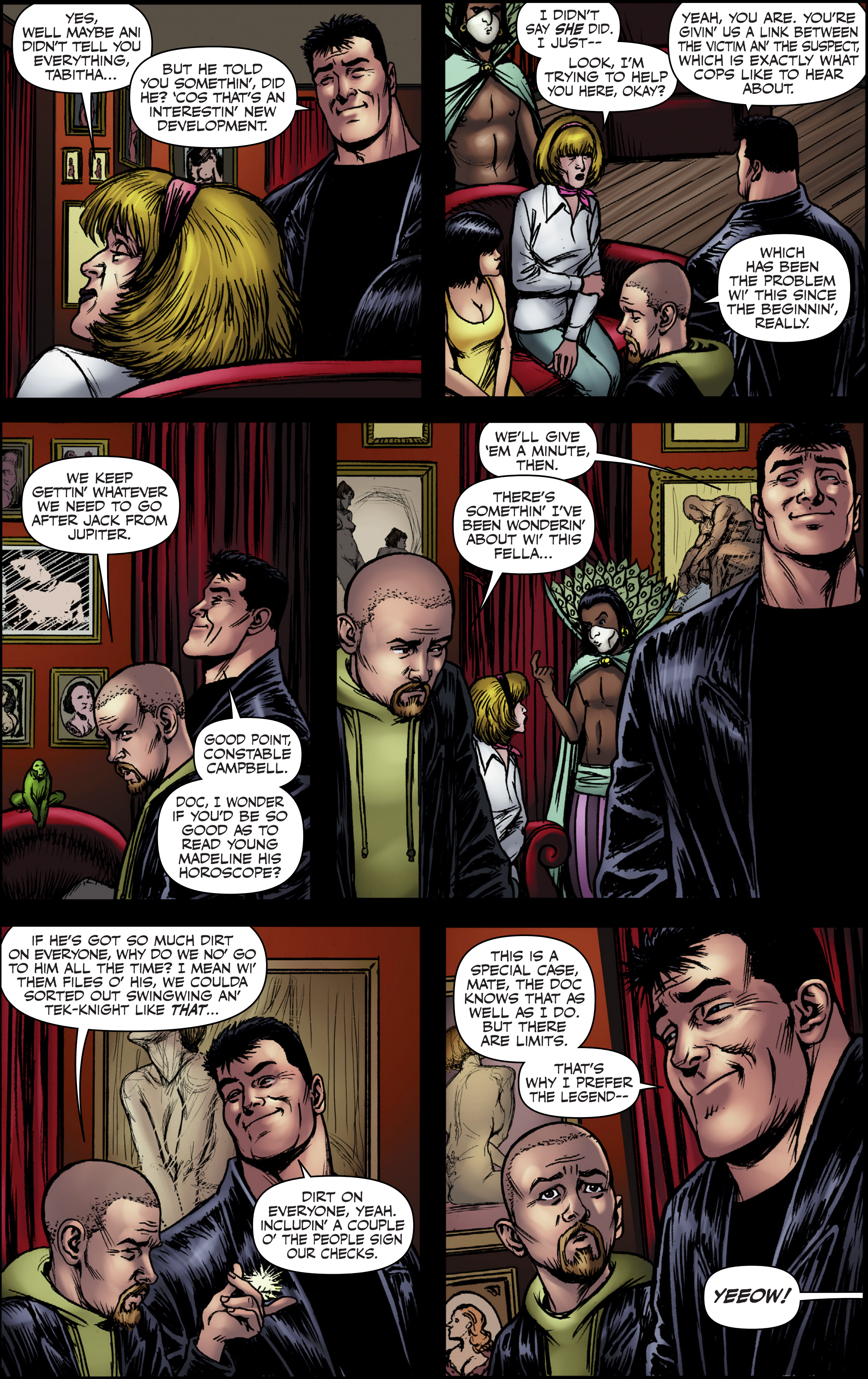

IS THIS MAKING YOU UNCOMFORTABLE...?

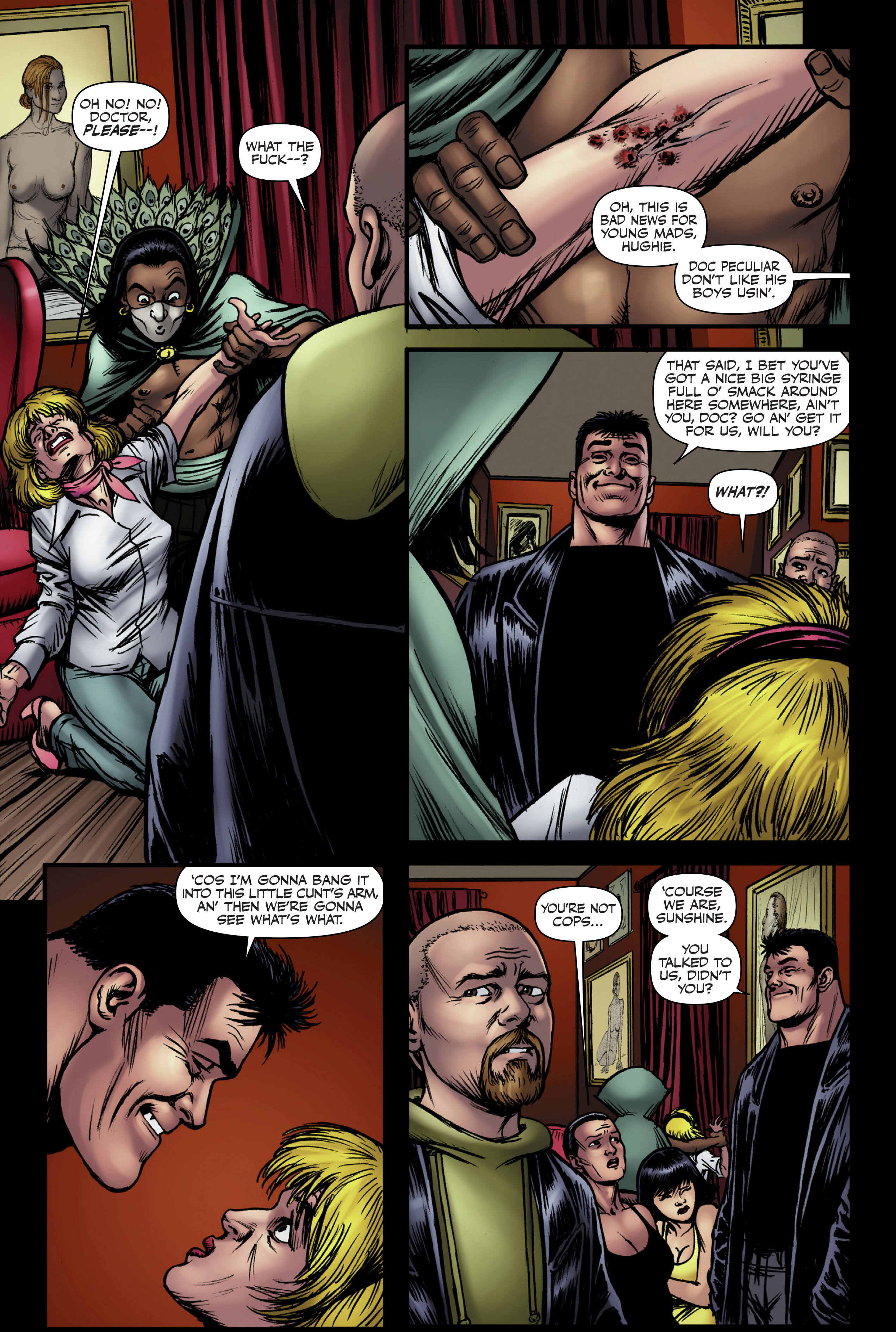
THE BIG RIDE

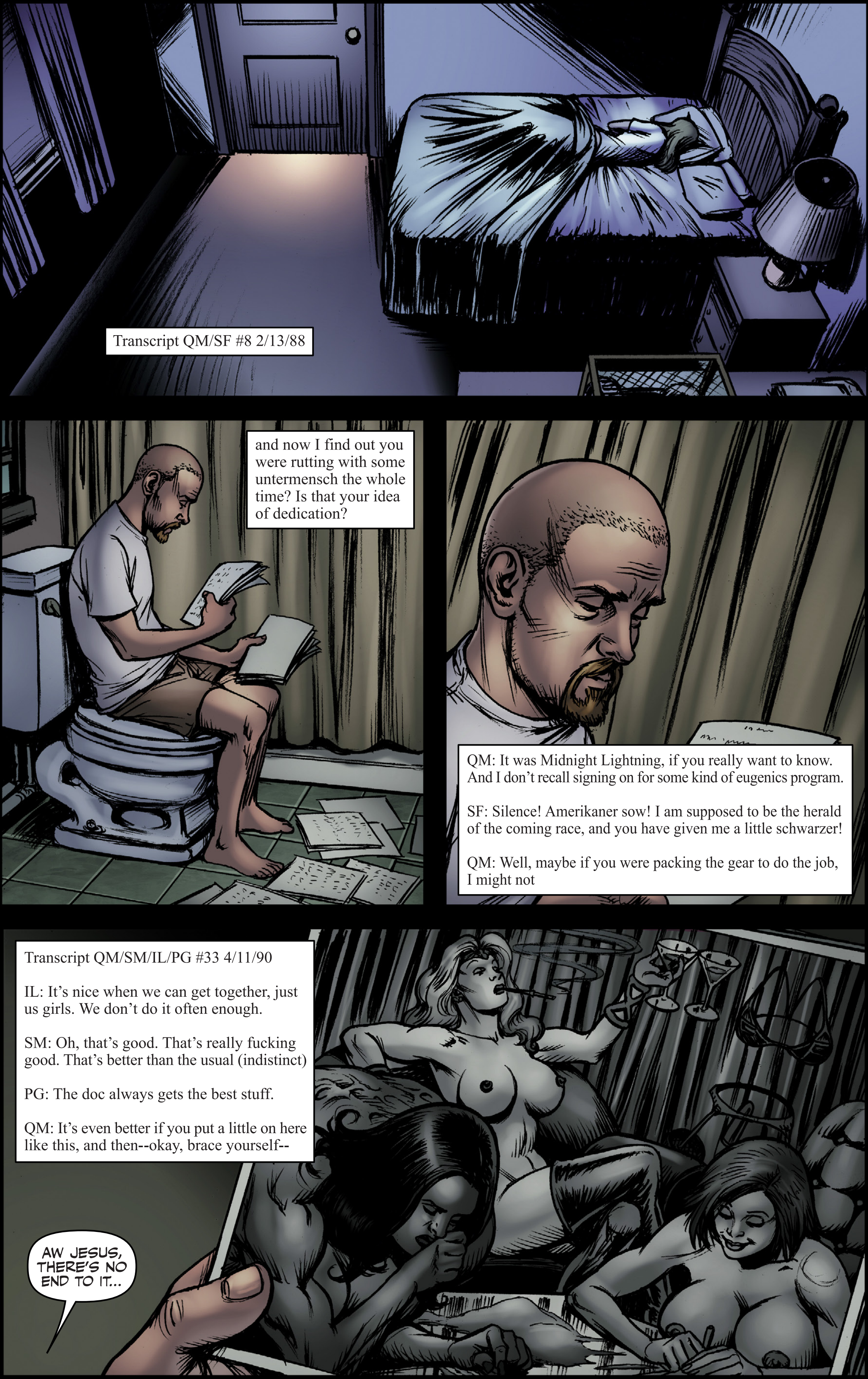
part three

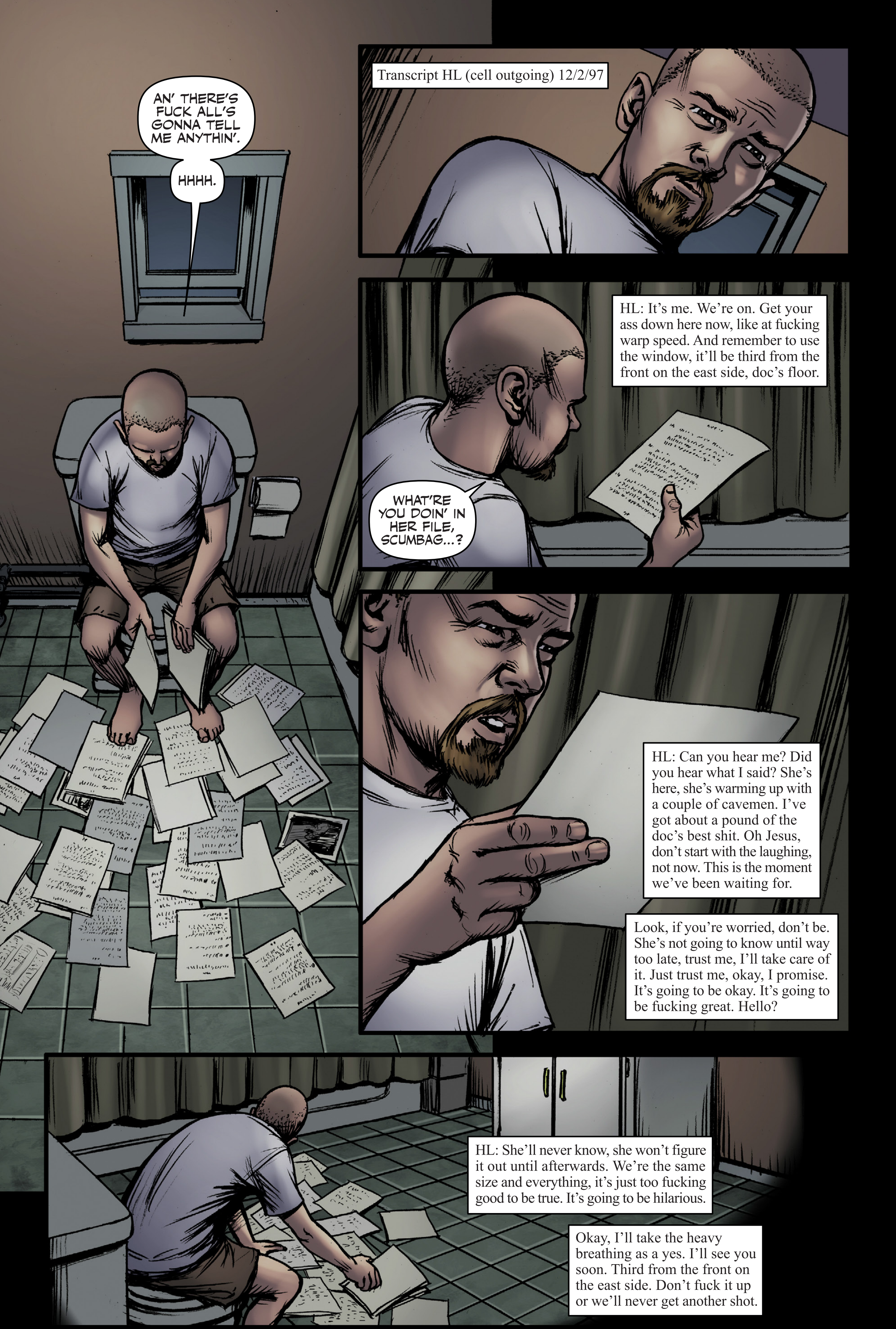

UH, NO...
ARE YOU SURE?
YOU DON'T SEEM EXACTLY OVERJOYED TO BE HERE TONIGHT. IN A ROOM WITH A PAIR OF PRE-OPERATIVE TRANSSEXUALS, I MEAN.
WELL, ALL RIGHT, I SUPPOSE IT IS MAKIN' ME UNCOMFORTABLE. MAY AS WELL BE HONEST, EH?
WHY NOT. BUT IMAGINE HOW UNCOMFORTABLE WE FEEL: OUR FRIEND'S BEEN MURDERED, AND THE N.Y.P.D.'S SENSE OF PRIORITY EXTENDS AS FAR AS SENDING TWO BRITISH EXCHANGE OFFICERS.
SO SHOW A LITTLE SENSITIVITY AND STOP LURKING OVER HERE IN THE CORNER, MM?
ALL RIGHT, JESUS CHRIST. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SUCH A...
LITTLE SLIT ABOUT IT? ONLY WAY I KNOW HOW TO BE, SWEETIE-PIE.
...AN' THEN THERE WAS THREE.
YOU MUST BE MADELAINE. C'MON AN' HAVE A SEAT AN' WE'LL GET STUCK IN, MY SON.

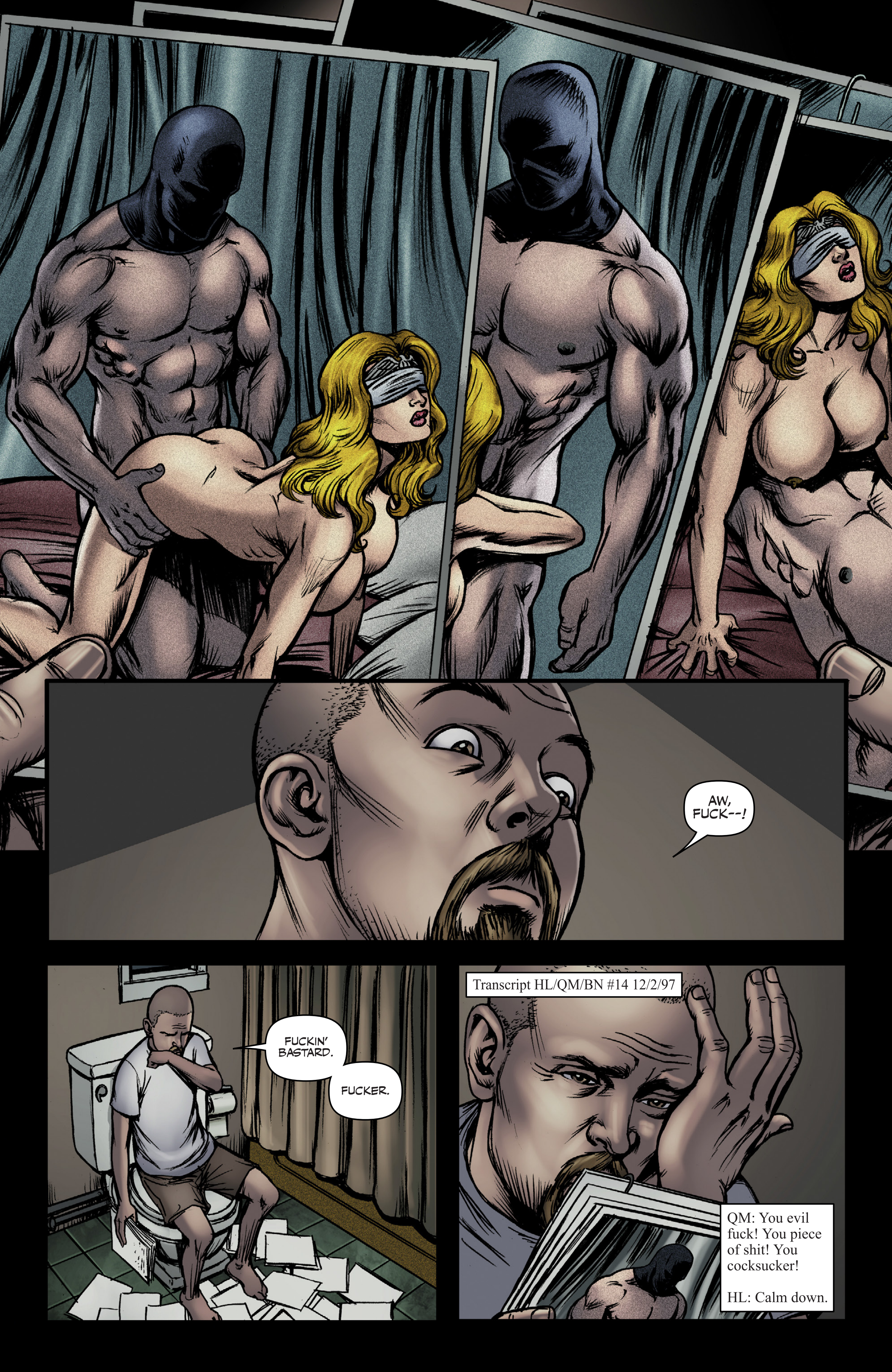

SO: JACK TURNS UP AT EIGHT. HE WANTS THREE O' YOU RATHER'N FOUR, SO YER MATE ANASTASIA GOES HOME ABOUT EIGHT-THIRTY. JACK LEAVES AT ONE IN THE MORNIN'.
SO FAR SO GOOD?
YES.
MM.
THAT'S IT.
WHY WAS ANASTASIA THE ONE TO GO? THERE ANYTHING BETWEEN THE TWO O' THEM, ONE WAY OR THE OTHER?
NO.
NOTHING AT ALL.
WELL...
WELL WHAT?
I GOT THE IMPRESSION HE WAS KIND OF SWEET ON HER. FOR A WHILE, ANYHOW.
RECENTLY, NOT SO MUCH.
DIDN'T SAY NOTHIN' ABOUT IT WHEN THE OFFICERS TALKED TO YOU THE OTHER DAY, MADS.
IT'S JUST HOW IT SEEMED TO ME, THINKING THINGS OVER SINCE. DIDN'T REALLY OCCUR TO ME BEFORE.
SO WHEN DID YOU DEVELOP THIS IMPRESSION HE WAS SWEET ON ANI, EXACTLY? WHEN THE TWO OF YOU WERE GIVING HIM A DOUBLE-ANAL, DID IT SEEM LIKE HE LIKED HER JUST A LITTLE BIT BETTER?
WHAT THE FUCK IS YOUR PROBLEM--?
WHAT THE FUCK IS YOURS?
I'VE BEEN WITH YOU AND ANI AND JENNA EVERY TIME THAT LITTLE GOBLIN'S BEEN HERE, AND I DON'T RECALL HIM SHOWING THE SLIGHTEST BIT OF AFFECTION FOR ANY OF US. I CERTAINLY DON'T RECALL YOU MENTIONING THIS EVEN ONCE.

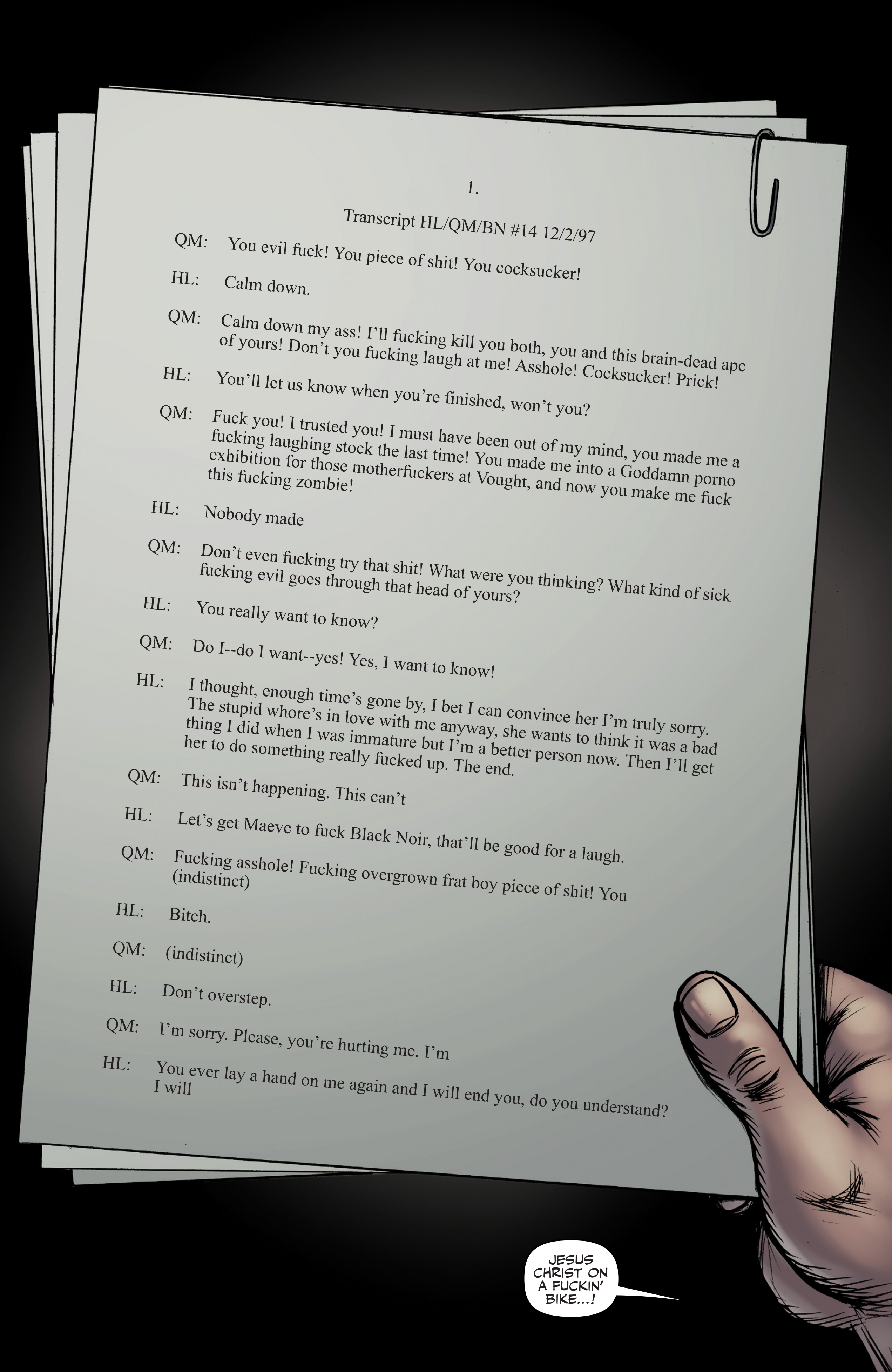

YES, WELL MAYBE ANI DIDN'T TELL YOU EVERYTHING, TABITHA...
BUT HE TOLD YOU SOMETHIN', DID HE? 'COS THAT'S AN INTERESTIN' NEW DEVELOPMENT.
I DIDN'T SAY *SHE* DID. I JUST--
LOOK, I'M TRYING TO HELP YOU HERE, OKAY?
YEAH, YOU ARE. YOU'RE GIVIN' US A LINK BETWEEN THE VICTIM AN' THE SUSPECT, WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT COPS LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT.
WHICH HAS BEEN THE PROBLEM WI' THIS SINCE THE BEGINNIN', REALLY.
WE KEEP GETTIN' WHATEVER WE NEED TO GO AFTER JACK FROM JUPITER.
GOOD POINT, CONSTABLE CAMPBELL.
DOC, I WONDER IF YOU'D BE SO GOOD AS TO READ YOUNG MADELINE HIS HOROSCOPE?
WE'LL GIVE 'EM A MINUTE, THEN.
THERE'S SOMETHIN' I'VE BEEN WONDERIN' ABOUT WI' THIS FELLA...
IF HE'S GOT SO MUCH DIRT ON EVERYONE, WHY DO WE NO' GO TO HIM ALL THE TIME? I MEAN WI' THEM FILES O' HIS, WE COULDA SORTED OUT SWINGWING AN' TEK-KNIGHT LIKE *THAT*...
DIRT ON EVERYONE, YEAH. INCLUDIN' A COUPLE O' THE PEOPLE SIGN OUR CHECKS.
THIS IS A SPECIAL CASE, MATE, THE DOC KNOWS THAT AS WELL AS I DO. BUT THERE ARE LIMITS.
THAT'S WHY I PREFER THE LEGEND--
YEEOW!


OH NO! NO! DOCTOR, *PLEASE*--!
WHAT THE FUCK--?
OH, THIS IS BAD NEWS FOR YOUNG MADS, HUGHIE.
DOC PECULIAR DON'T LIKE HIS BOYS USIN'.
THAT SAID, I BET YOU'VE GOT A NICE BIG SYRINGE FULL O' SMACK AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE, AIN'T YOU, DOC? GO AN' GET IT FOR US, WILL YOU?
WHAT?!
'COS I'M GONNA BANG IT INTO THIS LITTLE CUNT'S ARM, AN' THEN WE'RE GONNA SEE WHAT'S WHAT.
YOU'RE NOT COPS...
'COURSE WE ARE, SUNSHINE.
YOU TALKED TO US, DIDN'T YOU?


Transcript QM/SF #8 2/13/88
and now I find out you were rutting with some untermensch the whole time? Is that your idea of dedication?
QM: It was Midnight Lightning, if you really want to know. And I don’t recall signing on for some kind of eugenics program.
SF: Silence! Amerikaner sow! I am supposed to be the herald of the coming race, and you have given me a little schwarzer!
QM: Well, maybe if you were packing the gear to do the job, I might not
Transcript QM/SM/IL/PG #33 4/11/90
IL: It’s nice when we can get together, just us girls. We don’t do it often enough.
SM: Oh, that’s good. That’s really fucking good. That’s better than the usual (indistinct)
PG: The doc always gets the best stuff.
QM: It’s even better if you put a little on here like this, and then--okay, brace yourself--
AW JESUS, THERE’S NO END TO IT...


AN' THERE'S FUCK ALL'S GONNA TELL ME ANYTHIN'.
HHHH.
Transcript HL (cell outgoing) 12/2/97
HL: It's me. We're on. Get your ass down here now, like at fucking warp speed. And remember to use the window, it'll be third from the front on the east side, doc's floor.
WHAT'RE YOU DOIN' IN HER FILE, SCUMBAG...?
HL: Can you hear me? Did you hear what I said? She's here, she's warming up with a couple of cavemen. I've got about a pound of the doc's best shit. Oh Jesus, don't start with the laughing, not now. This is the moment we've been waiting for.
Look, if you're worried, don't be. She's not going to know until way too late, trust me, I'll take care of it. Just trust me, okay, I promise. It's going to be okay. It's going to be fucking great. Hello?
HL: She'll never know, she won't figure it out until afterwards. We're the same size and everything, it's just too fucking good to be true. It's going to be hilarious.
Okay, I'll take the heavy breathing as a yes. I'll see you soon. Third from the front on the east side. Don't fuck it up or we'll never get another shot.


AW, FUCK--!
FUCKIN' BASTARD.
FUCKER.
Transcript HL/QM/BN #14 12/2/97
QM: You evil fuck! You piece of shit! You cocksucker!
HL: Calm down.



1.

Transcript HL/QM/BN #14 12/2/97

QM: You evil fuck! You piece of shit! You cocksucker!

HL: Calm down.

QM: Calm down my ass! I'll fucking kill you both, you and this brain-dead ape of yours! Don't you fucking laugh at me! Asshole! Cocksucker! Prick!

HL: You'll let us know when you're finished, won't you?

QM: Fuck you! I trusted you! I must have been out of my mind, you made me a fucking laughing stock the last time! You made me into a Goddamn porno exhibition for those motherfuckers at Vought, and now you make me fuck this fucking zombie!

HL: Nobody made

QM: Don't even fucking try that shit! What were you thinking? What kind of sick fucking evil goes through that head of yours?

HL: You really want to know?

QM: Do I--do I want--yes! Yes, I want to know!

HL: I thought, enough time's gone by, I bet I can convince her I'm truly sorry. The stupid whore's in love with me anyway, she wants to think it was a bad thing I did when I was immature but I'm a better person now. Then I'll get her to do something really fucked up. The end.

QM: This isn't happening. This can't

HL: Let's get Maeve to fuck Black Noir, that'll be good for a laugh.

QM: Fucking asshole! Fucking overgrown frat boy piece of shit! You (indistinct)

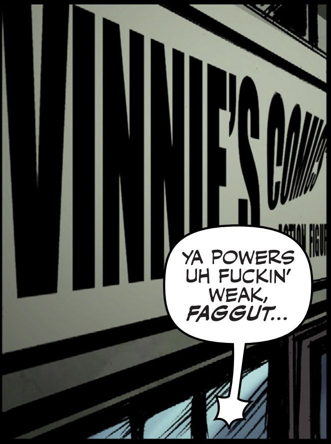
HL: Bitch.

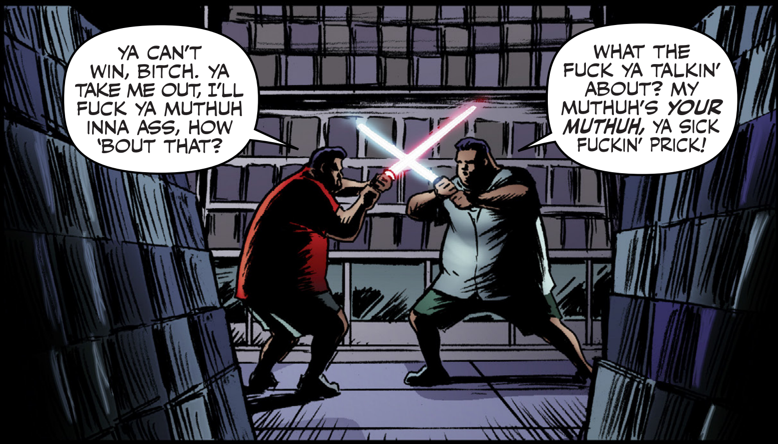
QM: (indistinct)

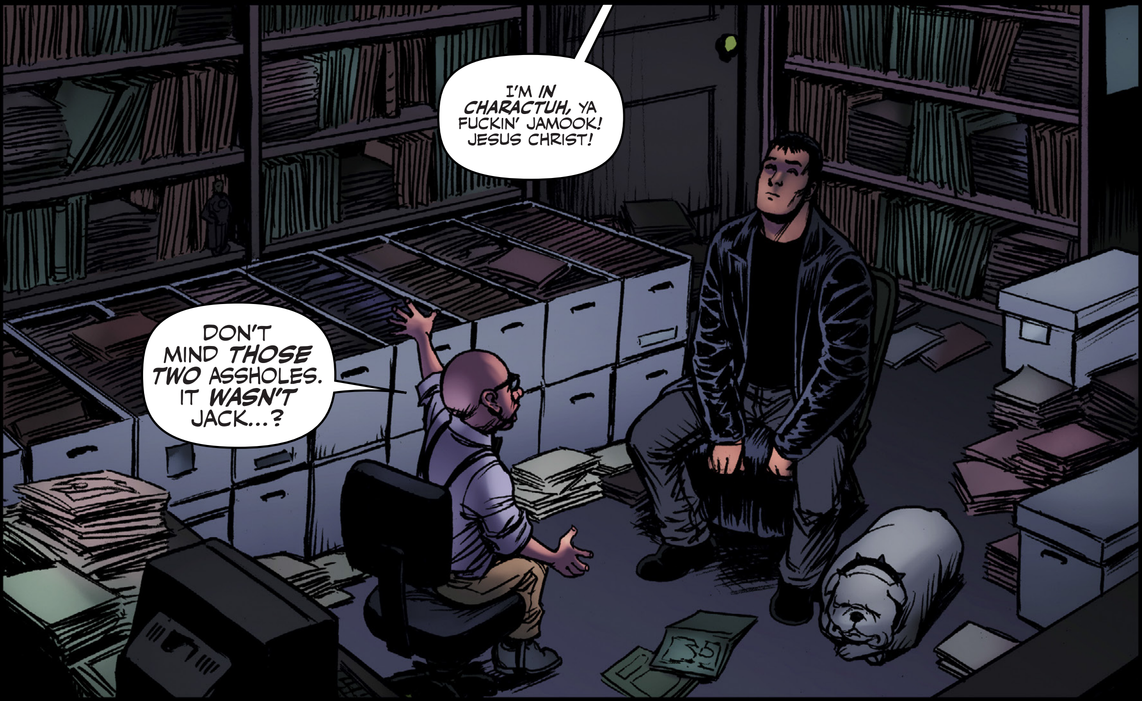
HL: Don't overstep.

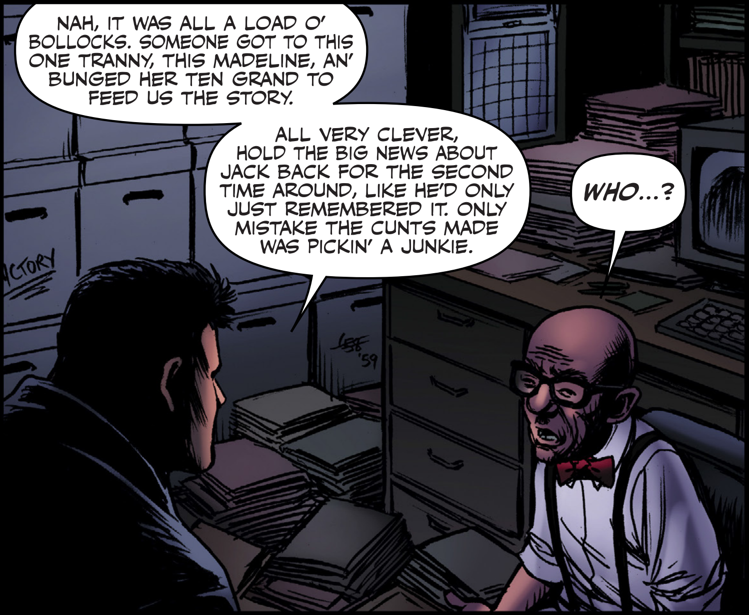
QM: I'm sorry. Please, you're hurting me. I'm

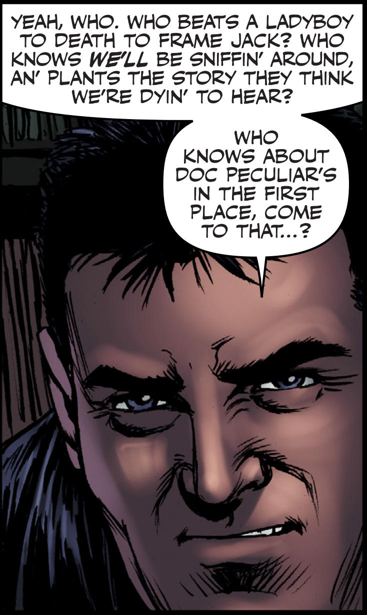
HL: You ever lay a hand on me again and I will end you, do you understand? I will

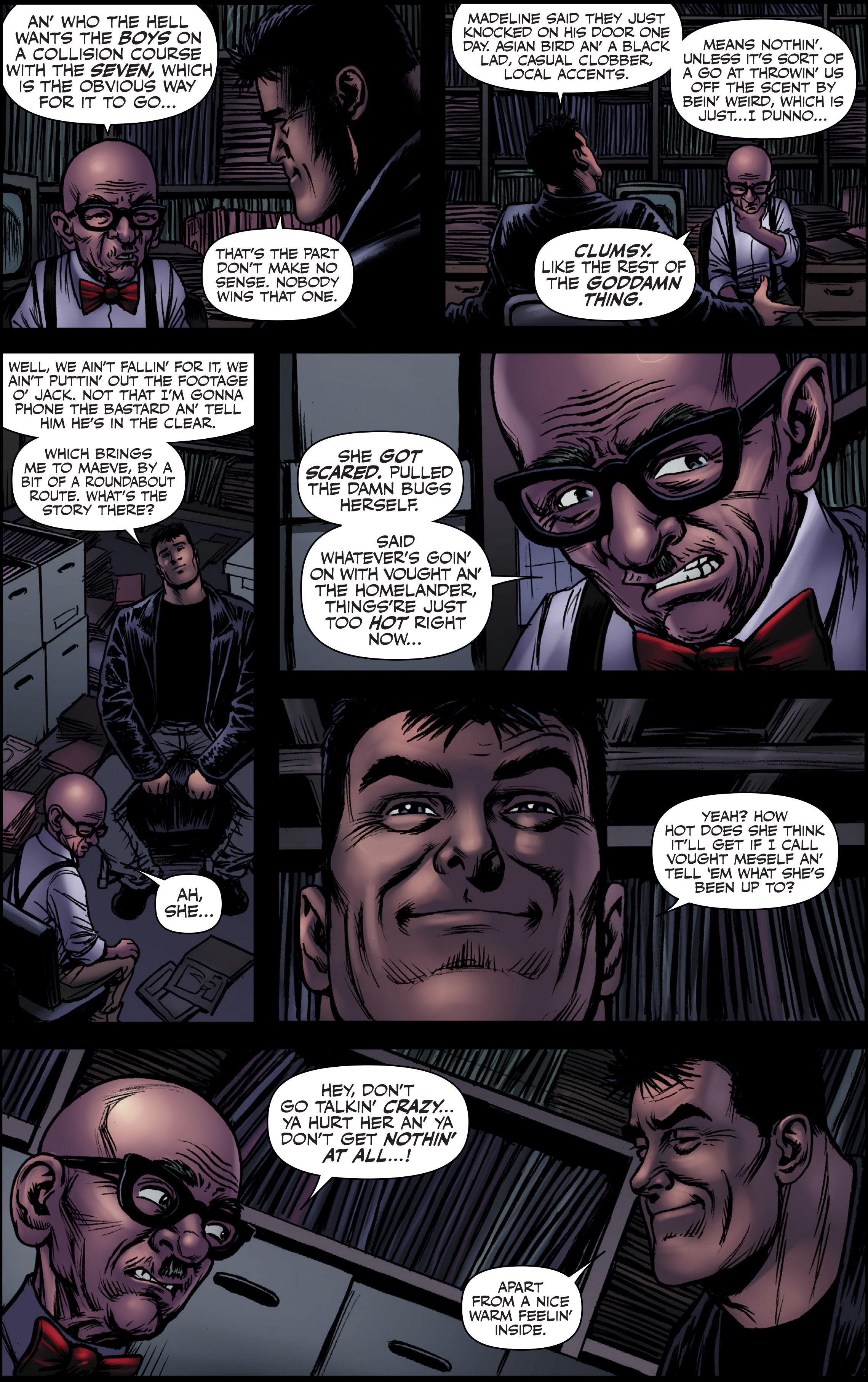

VINNIE'S COM
ACTION FIGU
YA POWERS UH FUCKIN' WEAK, *FAGGUT*...

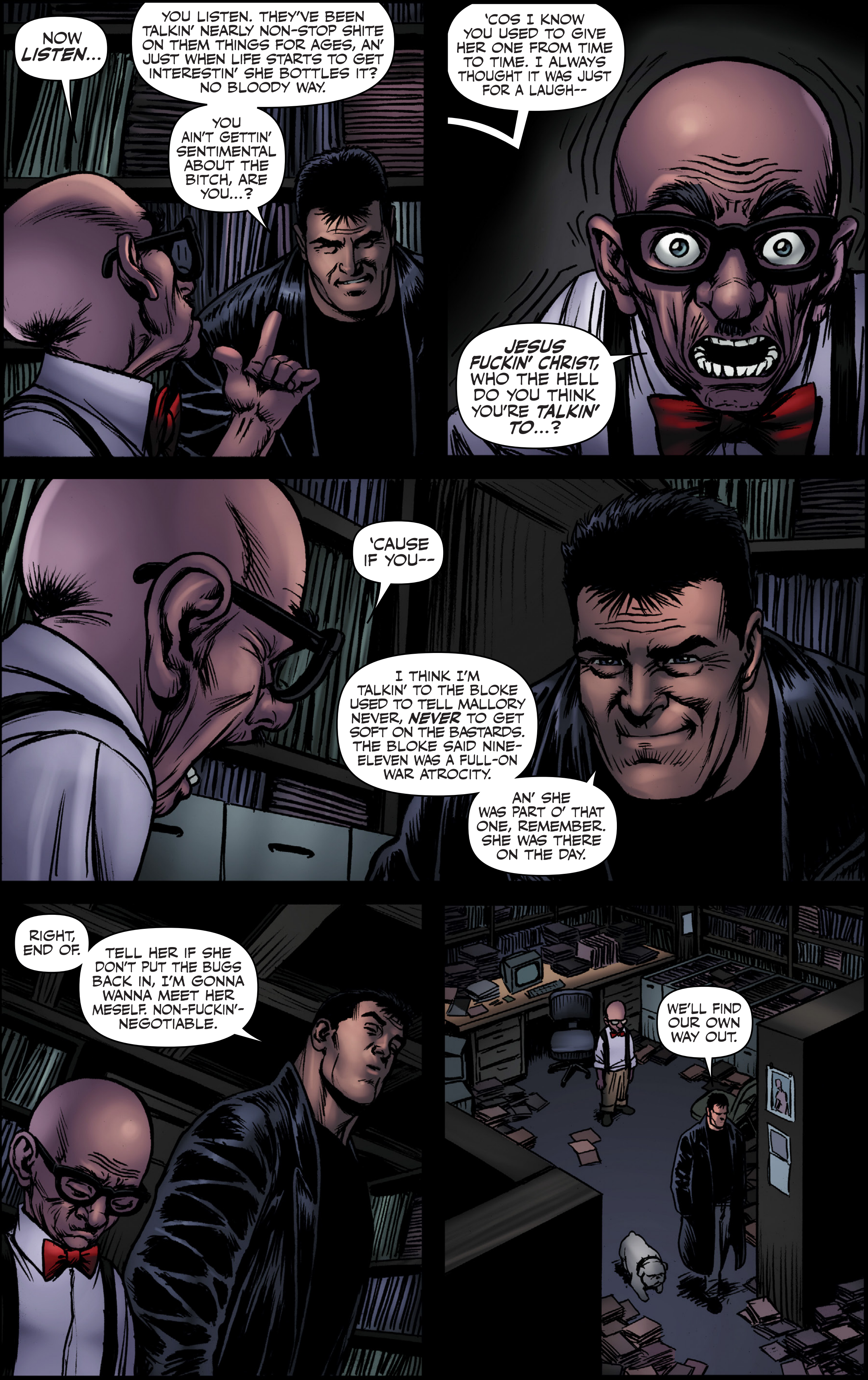

YA CAN'T WIN, BITCH. YA TAKE ME OUT, I'LL FUCK YA MUTHUH INNA ASS, HOW 'BOUT THAT?
WHAT THE FUCK YA TALKIN' ABOUT? MY MUTHUH'S *YOUR MUTHUH,* YA SICK FUCKIN' PRICK!

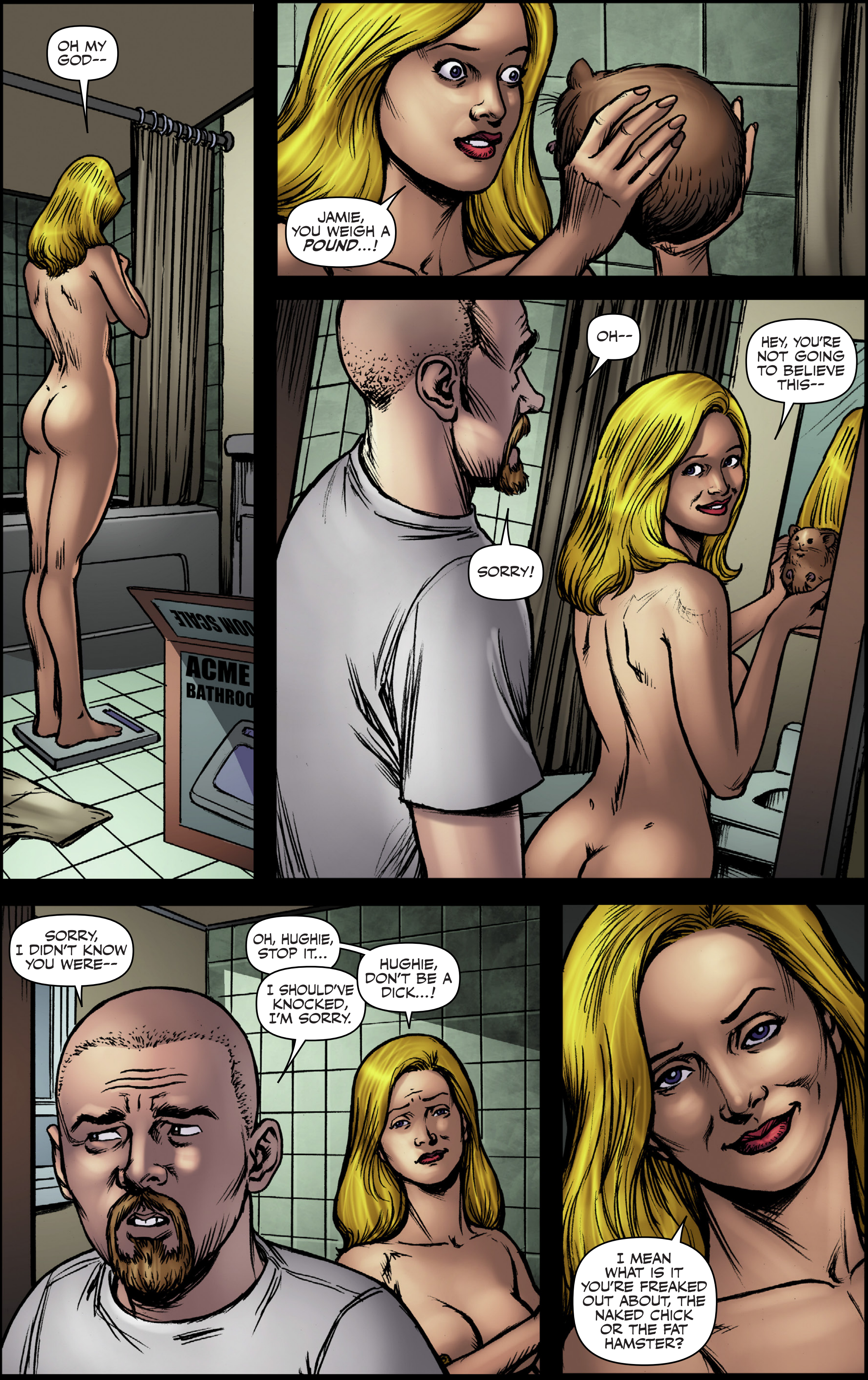

I'M *IN CHARACTUH,* YA FUCKIN' JAMOOK! JESUS CHRIST!
DON'T MIND *THOSE TWO* ASSHOLES. IT *WASN'T* JACK...?

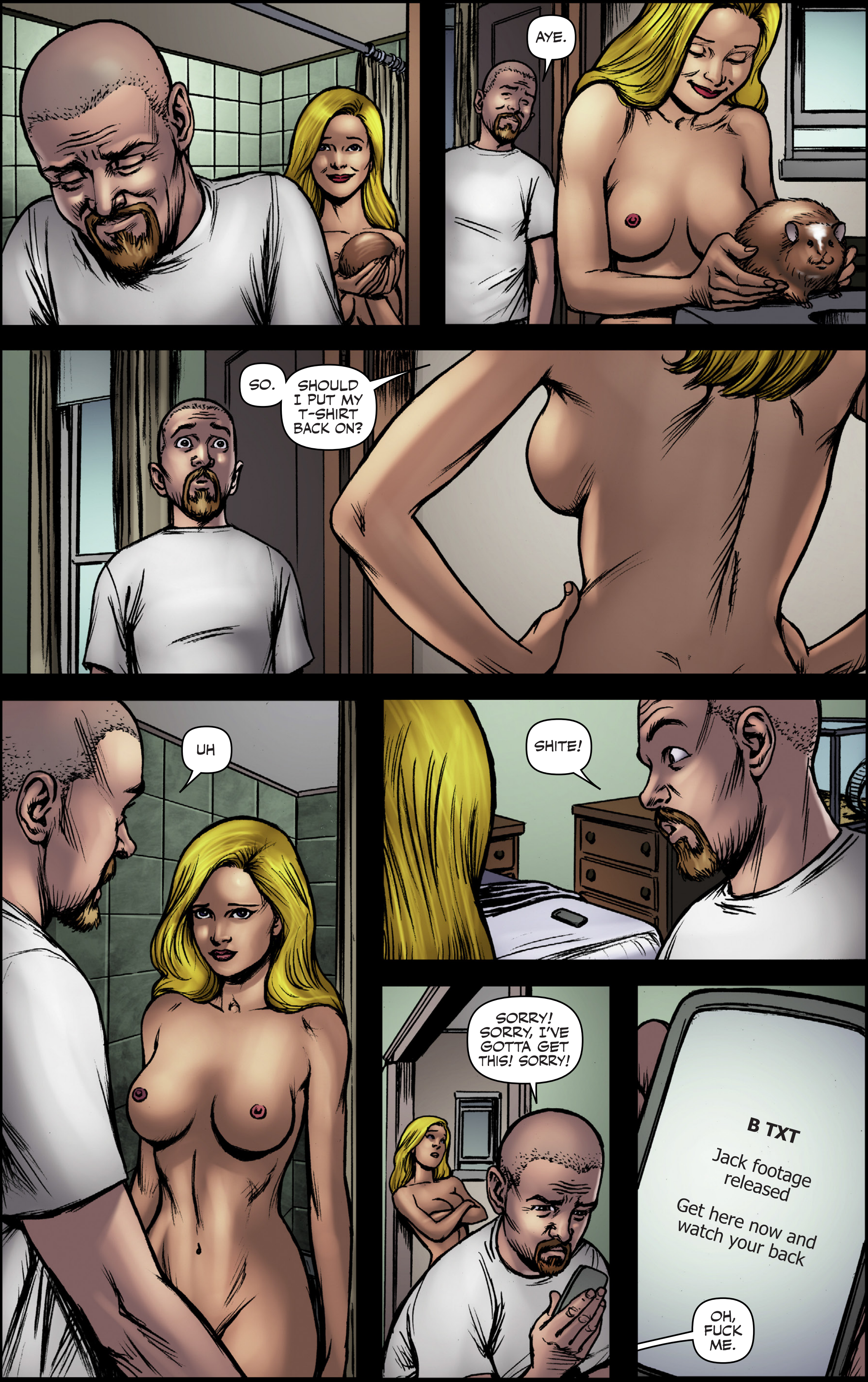

NAH, IT WAS ALL A LOAD O' BOLLOCKS. SOMEONE GOT TO THIS ONE TRANNY, THIS MADELINE, AN' BUNGED HER TEN GRAND TO FEED US THE STORY.
ALL VERY CLEVER, HOLD THE BIG NEWS ABOUT JACK BACK FOR THE SECOND TIME AROUND, LIKE HE'D ONLY JUST REMEMBERED IT. ONLY MISTAKE THE CUNTS MADE WAS PICKIN' A JUNKIE.
WHO...?
CTORY

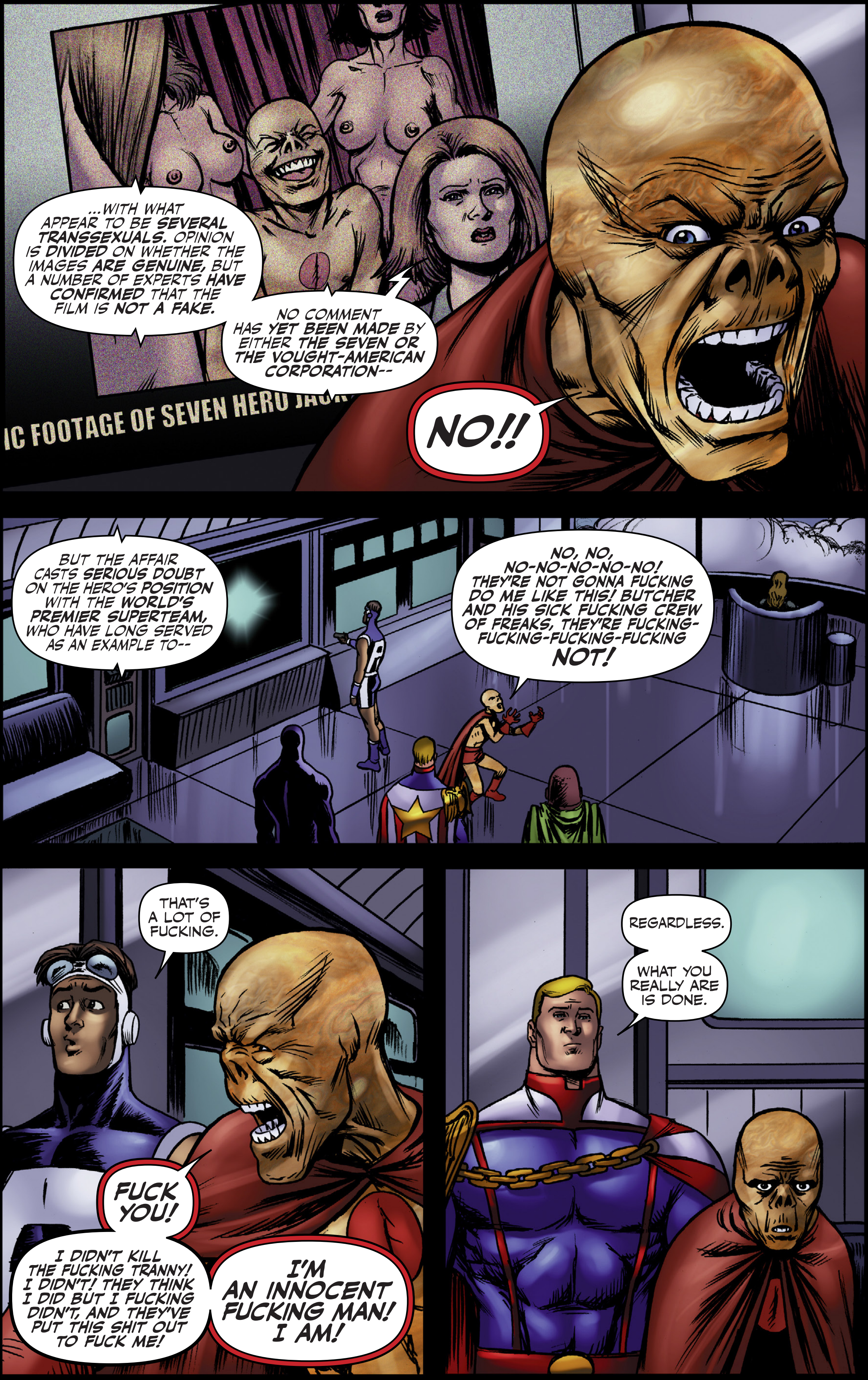

YEAH, WHO. WHO BEATS A LADYBOY TO DEATH TO FRAME JACK? WHO KNOWS *WE'LL* BE SNIFFIN' AROUND, AN' PLANTS THE STORY THEY THINK WE'RE DYIN' TO HEAR?
WHO KNOWS ABOUT DOC PECULIAR'S IN THE FIRST PLACE, COME TO THAT...?

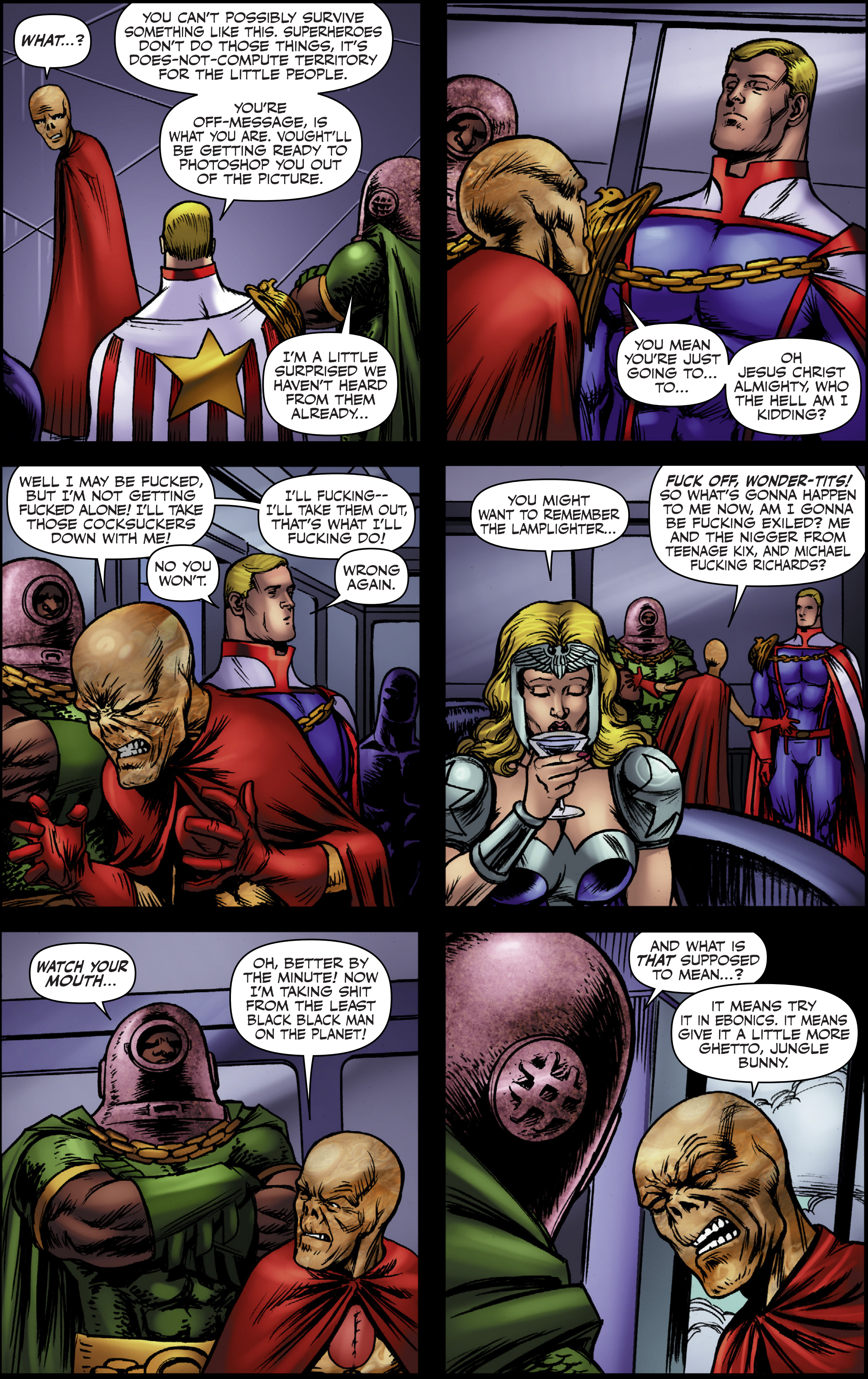

AN' WHO THE HELL WANTS THE *BOYS* ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH THE *SEVEN,* WHICH IS THE OBVIOUS WAY FOR IT TO GO...
THAT'S THE PART DON'T MAKE NO SENSE. NOBODY WINS THAT ONE.
MADELINE SAID THEY JUST KNOCKED ON HIS DOOR ONE DAY. ASIAN BIRD AN' A BLACK LAD, CASUAL CLOBBER, LOCAL ACCENTS.
MEANS NOTHIN'. UNLESS IT'S SORT OF A GO AT THROWIN' US OFF THE SCENT BY BEIN' WEIRD, WHICH IS JUST...I DUNNO...
CLUMSY. LIKE THE REST OF THE *GODDAMN THING.*
WELL, WE AIN'T FALLIN' FOR IT, WE AIN'T PUTTIN' OUT THE FOOTAGE O' JACK. NOT THAT I'M GONNA PHONE THE BASTARD AN' TELL HIM HE'S IN THE CLEAR.
WHICH BRINGS ME TO MAEVE, BY A BIT OF A ROUNDABOUT ROUTE. WHAT'S THE STORY THERE?
AH, SHE...
SHE *GOT SCARED.* PULLED THE DAMN BUGS HERSELF.
SAID WHATEVER'S GOIN' ON WITH VOUGHT AN' THE HOMELANDER, THINGS'RE JUST TOO *HOT* RIGHT NOW...
YEAH? HOW HOT DOES SHE THINK IT'LL GET IF I CALL VOUGHT MESELF AN' TELL 'EM WHAT SHE'S BEEN UP TO?
HEY, DON'T GO TALKIN' *CRAZY*... YA HURT HER AN' YA DON'T GET *NOTHIN' AT ALL*...!
APART FROM A NICE WARM FEELIN' INSIDE.

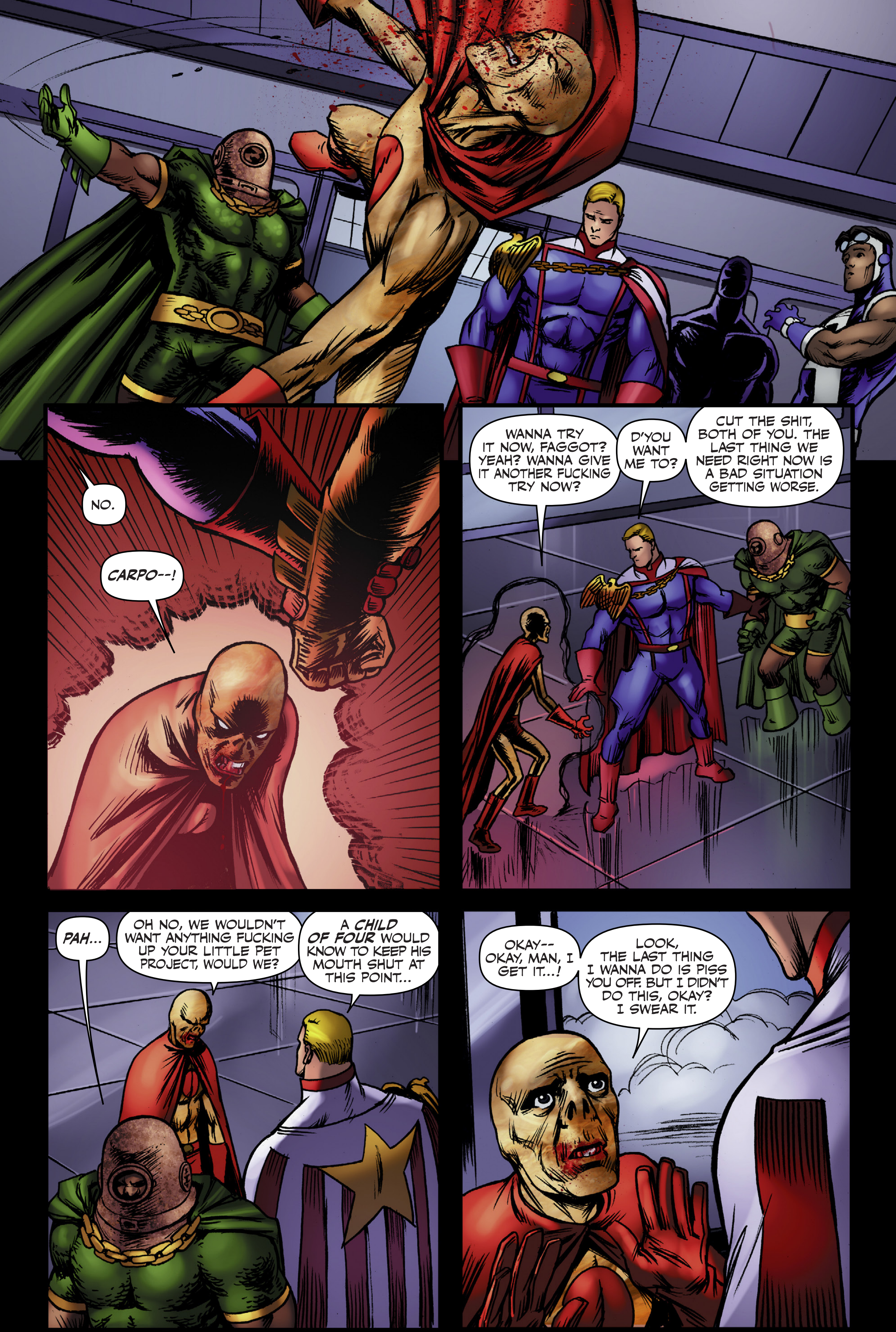

NOW *LISTEN*...
YOU LISTEN. THEY'VE BEEN TALKIN' NEARLY NON-STOP SHITE ON THEM THINGS FOR AGES, AN' JUST WHEN LIFE STARTS TO GET INTERESTIN' SHE BOTTLES IT? NO BLOODY WAY.
YOU AIN'T GETTIN' SENTIMENTAL ABOUT THE BITCH, ARE YOU...?
'COS I KNOW YOU USED TO GIVE HER ONE FROM TIME TO TIME. I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WAS JUST FOR A LAUGH--
JESUS FUCKIN' CHRIST, WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE *TALKIN'* TO...?
'CAUSE IF YOU--
I THINK I'M TALKIN' TO THE BLOKE USED TO TELL MALLORY NEVER, *NEVER* TO GET SOFT ON THE BASTARDS. THE BLOKE SAID NINE-ELEVEN WAS A FULL-ON WAR ATROCITY.
AN' SHE WAS PART O' THAT ONE, REMEMBER. SHE WAS THERE ON THE DAY.
RIGHT, END OF.
TELL HER IF SHE DON'T PUT THE BUGS BACK IN, I'M GONNA WANNA MEET HER MESELF. NON-FUCKIN'-NEGOTIABLE.
WE'LL FIND OUR OWN WAY OUT.

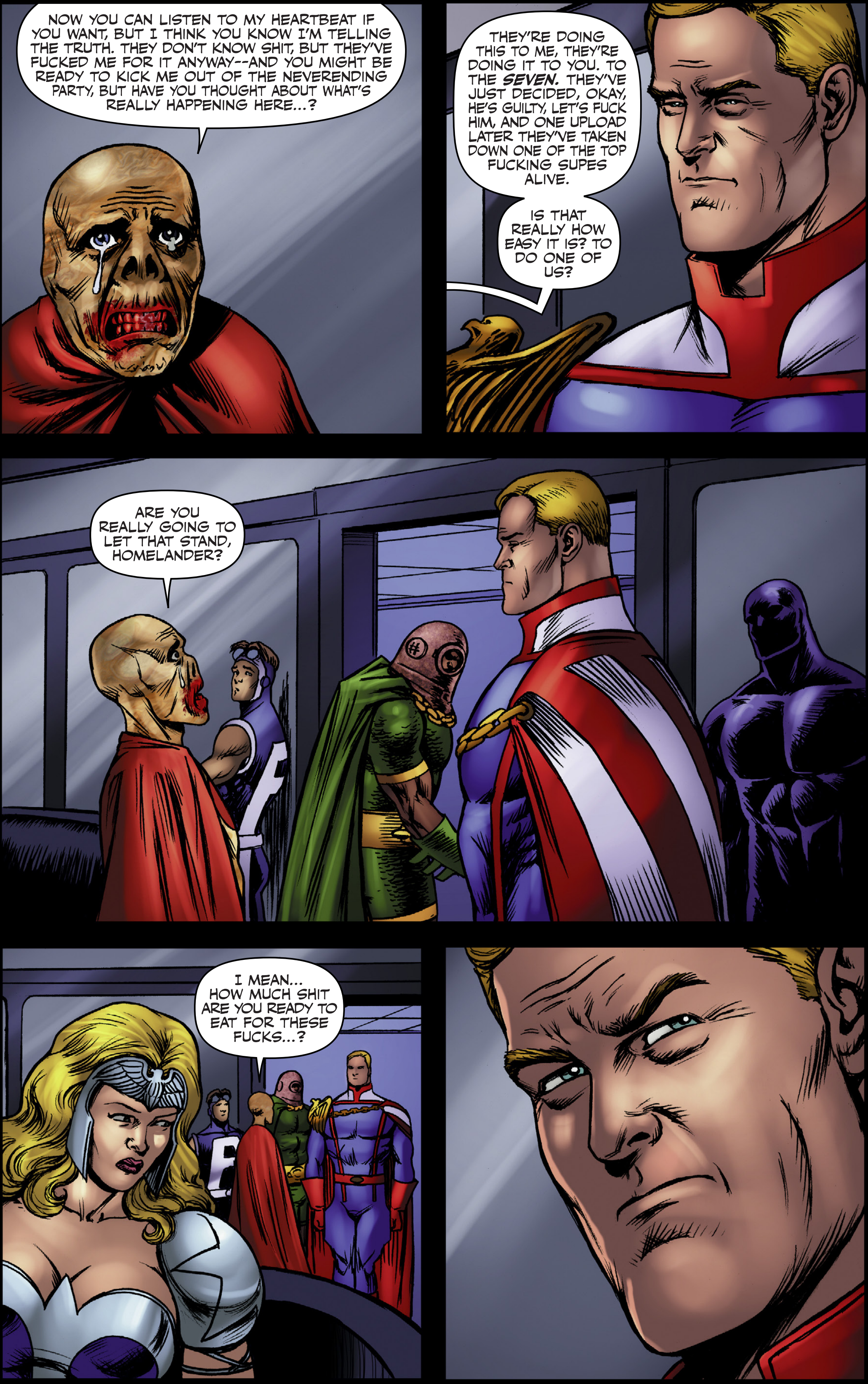

OH MY GOD--
ACME
BATHROO
JAMIE, YOU WEIGH A *POUND*...!
OH--
HEY, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS--
SORRY!
SORRY, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE--
OH, HUGHIE, STOP IT...
HUGHIE, DON'T BE A DICK...!
I SHOULD'VE KNOCKED, I'M SORRY.
I MEAN WHAT IS IT YOU'RE FREAKED OUT ABOUT, THE NAKED CHICK OR THE FAT HAMSTER?

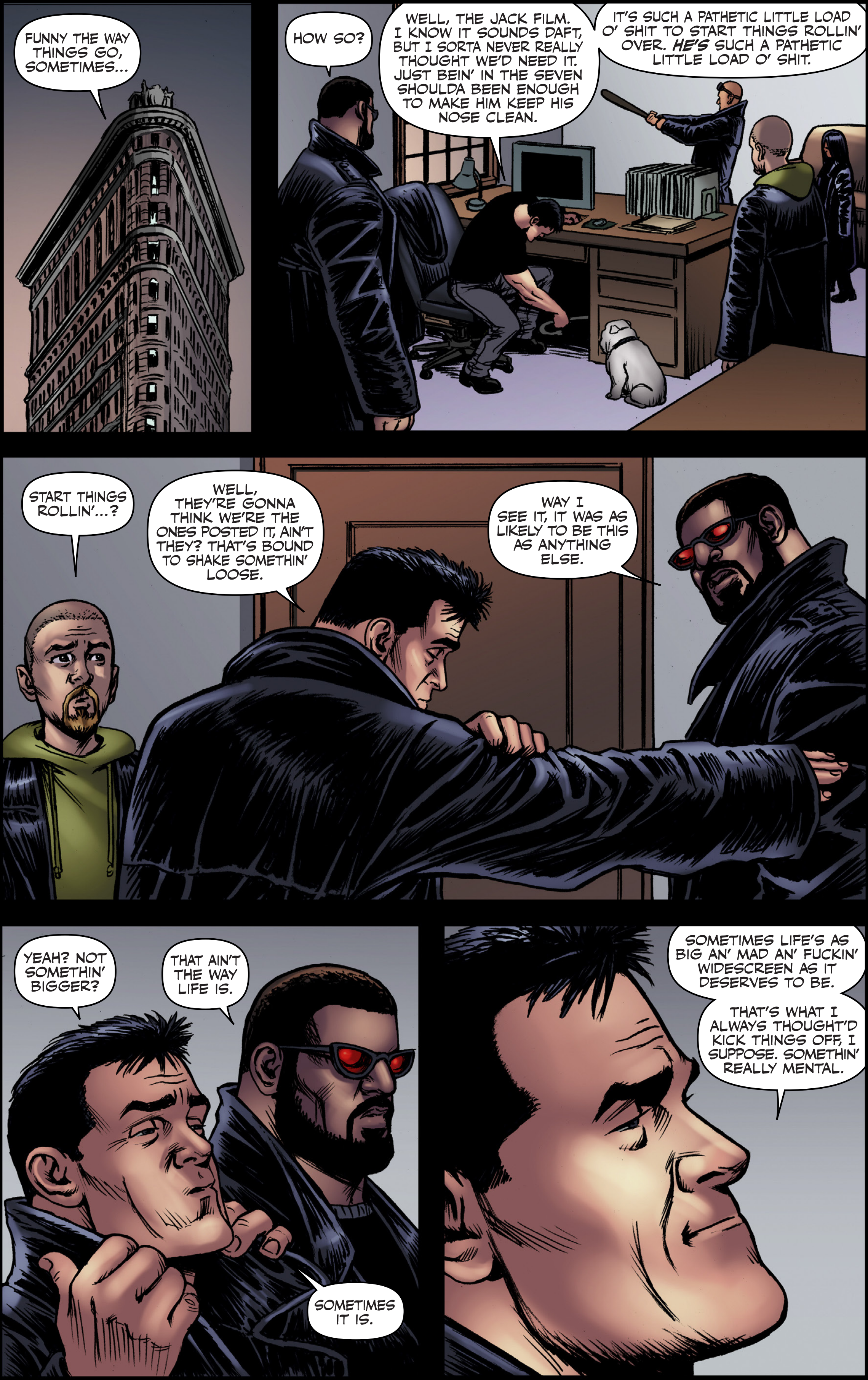

AYE.
SO.
SHOULD I PUT MY T-SHIRT BACK ON?
UH
SHITE!
SORRY! SORRY, I'VE GOTTA GET THIS! SORRY!
B TXT
Jack footage released
Get here now and watch your back
OH, FUCK ME.

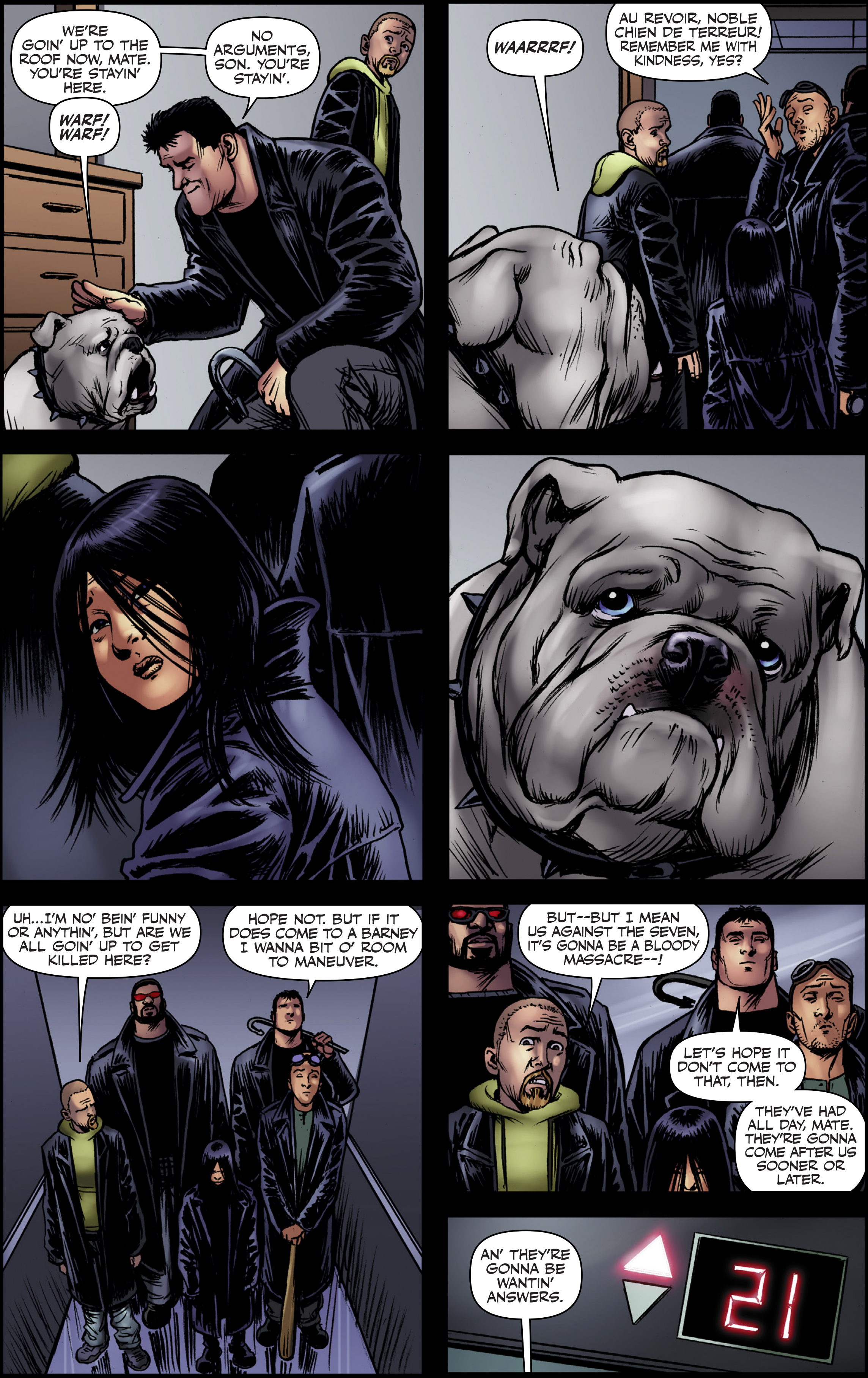

...WITH WHAT APPEAR TO BE SEVERAL TRANSSEXUALS. OPINION IS DIVIDED ON WHETHER THE IMAGES ARE GENUINE, BUT A NUMBER OF EXPERTS HAVE CONFIRMED THAT THE FILM IS NOT A FAKE.
NO COMMENT HAS YET BEEN MADE BY EITHER THE SEVEN OR THE VOUGHT-AMERICAN CORPORATION--
IC FOOTAGE OF SEVEN HERO JAC
NO!!
BUT THE AFFAIR CASTS SERIOUS DOUBT ON THE HERO'S POSITION WITH THE WORLD'S PREMIER SUPERTEAM, WHO HAVE LONG SERVED AS AN EXAMPLE TO--
NO, NO, NO-NO-NO-NO-NO! THEY'RE NOT GONNA FUCKING DO ME LIKE THIS! BUTCHER AND HIS SICK FUCKING CREW OF FREAKS, THEY'RE FUCKING-FUCKING-FUCKING-FUCKING NOT!
THAT'S A LOT OF FUCKING.
FUCK YOU!
I DIDN'T KILL THE FUCKING TRANNY! I DIDN'T! THEY THINK I DID BUT I FUCKING DIDN'T, AND THEY'VE PUT THIS SHIT OUT TO FUCK ME!
I'M AN INNOCENT FUCKING MAN! I AM!
REGARDLESS.
WHAT YOU REALLY ARE IS DONE.

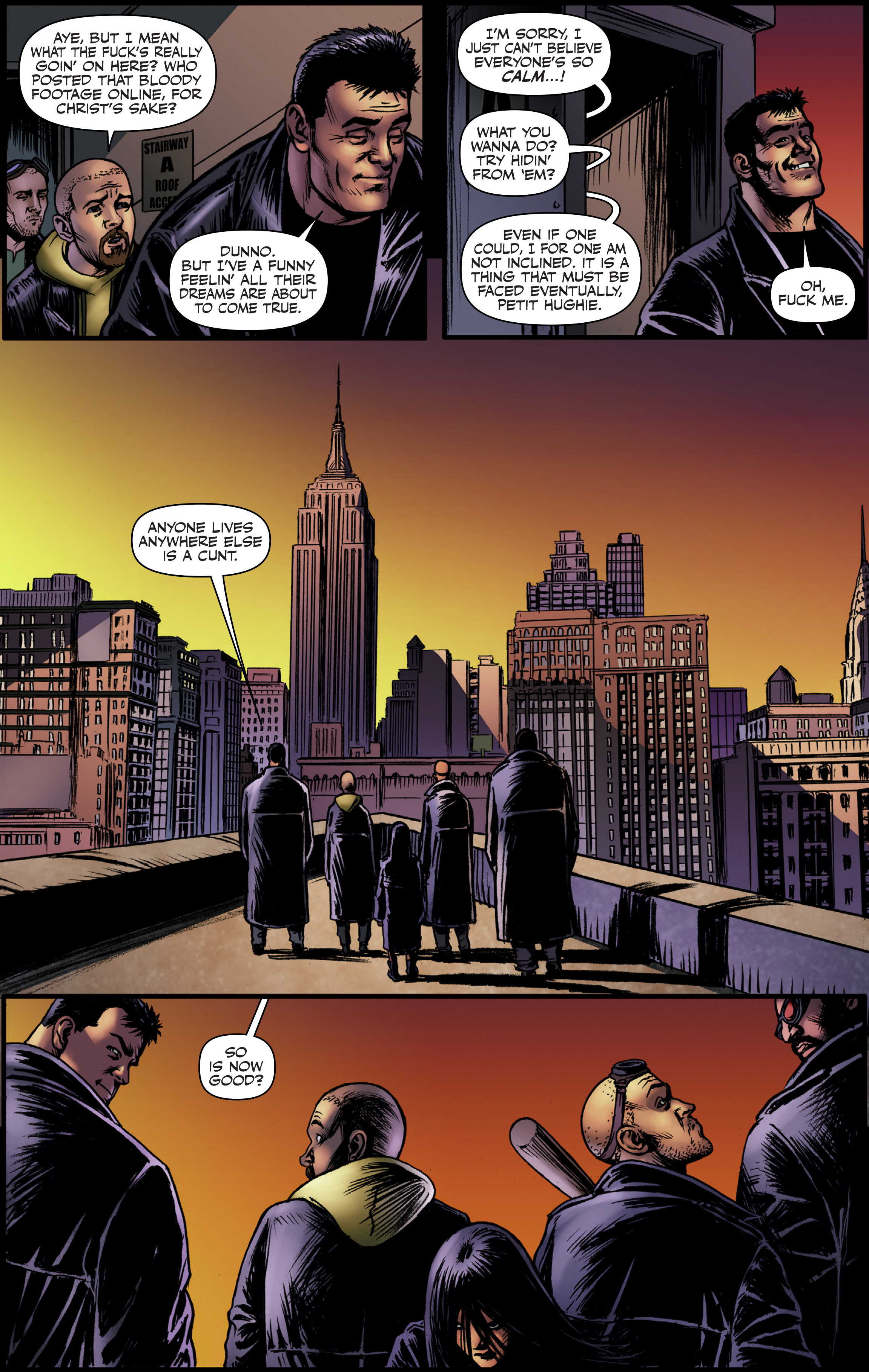

WHAT...?
YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY SURVIVE SOMETHING LIKE THIS. SUPERHEROES DON'T DO THOSE THINGS, IT'S DOES-NOT-COMPUTE TERRITORY FOR THE LITTLE PEOPLE.
YOU'RE OFF-MESSAGE, IS WHAT YOU ARE. VOUGHT'LL BE GETTING READY TO PHOTOSHOP YOU OUT OF THE PICTURE.
I'M A LITTLE SURPRISED WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM THEM ALREADY...
YOU MEAN YOU'RE JUST GOING TO... TO...
OH JESUS CHRIST ALMIGHTY, WHO THE HELL AM I KIDDING?
WELL I MAY BE FUCKED, BUT I'M NOT GETTING FUCKED ALONE! I'LL TAKE THOSE COCKSUCKERS DOWN WITH ME!
I'LL FUCKING-- I'LL TAKE THEM OUT, THAT'S WHAT I'LL FUCKING DO!
NO YOU WON'T.
WRONG AGAIN.
YOU MIGHT WANT TO REMEMBER THE LAMPLIGHTER...
FUCK OFF, WONDER-TITS! SO WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN TO ME NOW, AM I GONNA BE FUCKING EXILED? ME AND THE NIGGER FROM TEENAGE KIX, AND MICHAEL FUCKING RICHARDS?
WATCH YOUR MOUTH...
OH, BETTER BY THE MINUTE! NOW I'M TAKING SHIT FROM THE LEAST BLACK BLACK MAN ON THE PLANET!
AND WHAT IS *THAT* SUPPOSED TO MEAN...?
IT MEANS TRY IT IN EBONICS. IT MEANS GIVE IT A LITTLE MORE GHETTO, JUNGLE BUNNY.

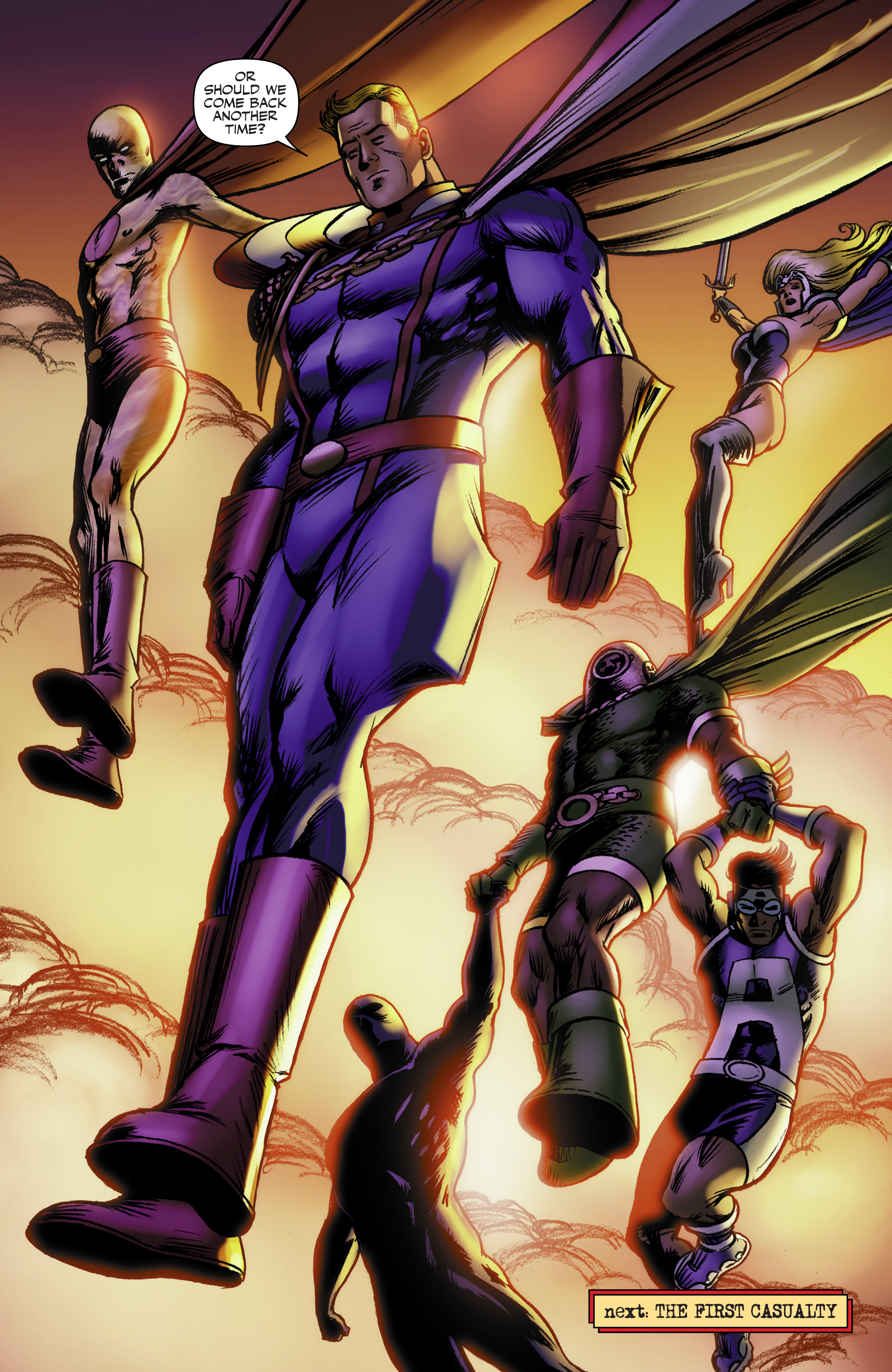

NO.
CARPO--!
WANNA TRY IT NOW, FAGGOT? YEAH? WANNA GIVE IT ANOTHER FUCKING TRY NOW?
D'YOU WANT ME TO?
CUT THE SHIT, BOTH OF YOU. THE LAST THING WE NEED RIGHT NOW IS A BAD SITUATION GETTING WORSE.
PAH...
OH NO, WE WOULDN'T WANT ANYTHING FUCKING UP YOUR LITTLE PET PROJECT, WOULD WE?
A *CHILD OF FOUR* WOULD KNOW TO KEEP HIS MOUTH SHUT AT THIS POINT...
OKAY-- OKAY, MAN, I GET IT...!
LOOK, THE LAST THING I WANNA DO IS PISS YOU OFF. BUT I DIDN'T DO THIS, OKAY? I SWEAR IT.


NOW YOU CAN LISTEN TO MY HEARTBEAT IF YOU WANT, BUT I THINK YOU KNOW I'M TELLING THE TRUTH. THEY DON'T KNOW SHIT, BUT THEY'VE FUCKED ME FOR IT ANYWAY--AND YOU MIGHT BE READY TO KICK ME OUT OF THE NEVERENDING PARTY, BUT HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING HERE...?
THEY'RE DOING THIS TO ME, THEY'RE DOING IT TO YOU. TO THE ***SEVEN.*** THEY'VE JUST DECIDED, OKAY, HE'S GUILTY, LET'S FUCK HIM, AND ONE UPLOAD LATER THEY'VE TAKEN DOWN ONE OF THE TOP FUCKING SUPES ALIVE.
IS THAT REALLY HOW EASY IT IS? TO DO ONE OF US?
ARE YOU REALLY GOING TO LET THAT STAND, HOMELANDER?
I MEAN... HOW MUCH SHIT ARE YOU READY TO EAT FOR THESE FUCKS...?

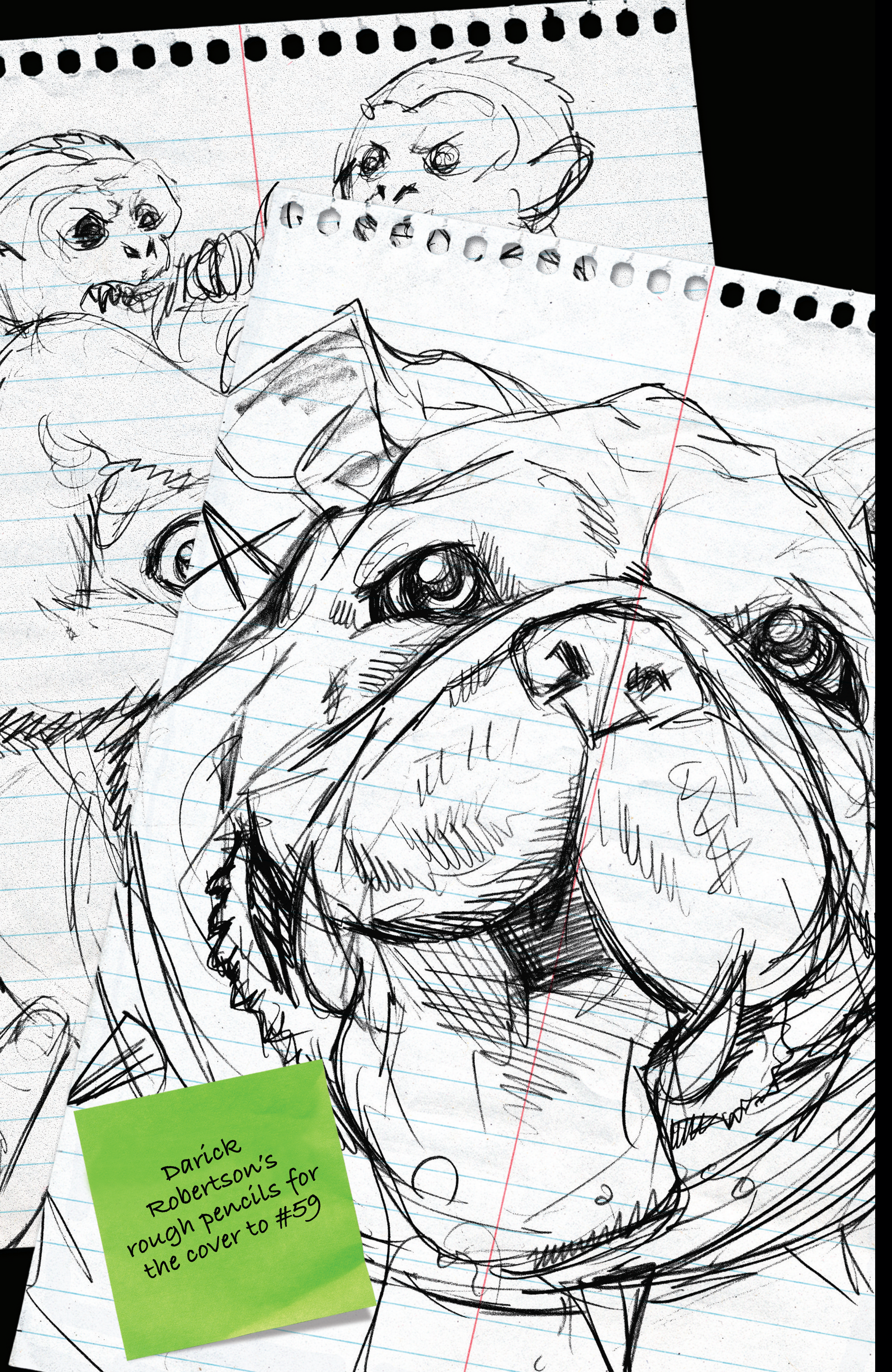

FUNNY THE WAY THINGS GO, SOMETIMES...
HOW SO?
WELL, THE JACK FILM. I KNOW IT SOUNDS DAFT, BUT I SORTA NEVER REALLY THOUGHT WE'D NEED IT. JUST BEIN' IN THE SEVEN SHOULDA BEEN ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM KEEP HIS NOSE CLEAN.
IT'S SUCH A PATHETIC LITTLE LOAD O' SHIT TO START THINGS ROLLIN' OVER. ***HE'S*** SUCH A PATHETIC LITTLE LOAD O' SHIT.
START THINGS ROLLIN'...?
WELL, THEY'RE GONNA THINK WE'RE THE ONES POSTED IT, AIN'T THEY? THAT'S BOUND TO SHAKE SOMETHIN' LOOSE.
WAY I SEE IT, IT WAS AS LIKELY TO BE THIS AS ANYTHING ELSE.
YEAH? NOT SOMETHIN' BIGGER?
THAT AIN'T THE WAY LIFE IS.
SOMETIMES IT IS.
SOMETIMES LIFE'S AS BIG AN' MAD AN' FUCKIN' WIDESCREEN AS IT DESERVES TO BE.
THAT'S WHAT I ALWAYS THOUGHT'D KICK THINGS OFF, I SUPPOSE. SOMETHIN' REALLY MENTAL.


WE'RE GOIN' UP TO THE ROOF NOW, MATE. YOU'RE STAYIN' HERE.
NO ARGUMENTS, SON. YOU'RE STAYIN'.
WARF! WARF!
WAARRRF!
AU REVOIR, NOBLE CHIEN DE TERREUR! REMEMBER ME WITH KINDNESS, YES?
UH...I'M NO' BEIN' FUNNY OR ANYTHIN', BUT ARE WE ALL GOIN' UP TO GET KILLED HERE?
HOPE NOT. BUT IF IT DOES COME TO A BARNEY I WANNA BIT O' ROOM TO MANEUVER.
BUT--BUT I MEAN US AGAINST THE SEVEN, IT'S GONNA BE A BLOODY MASSACRE--!
LET'S HOPE IT DON'T COME TO THAT, THEN.
THEY'VE HAD ALL DAY, MATE. THEY'RE GONNA COME AFTER US SOONER OR LATER.
AN' THEY'RE GONNA BE WANTIN' ANSWERS.
21

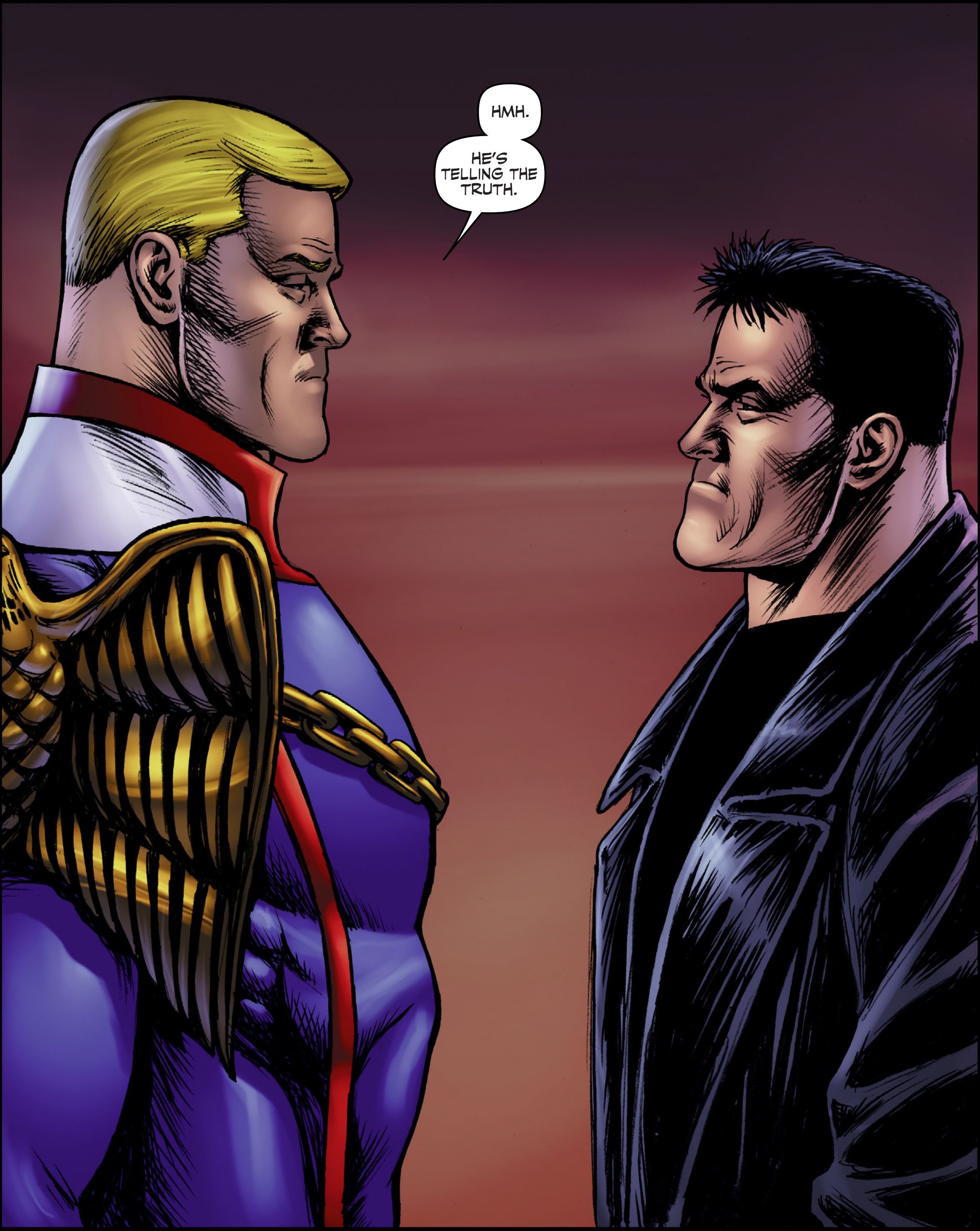

AYE, BUT I MEAN WHAT THE FUCK'S REALLY GOIN' ON HERE? WHO POSTED THAT BLOODY FOOTAGE ONLINE, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE?
STAIRWAY A ROOF ACC
DUNNO. BUT I'VE A FUNNY FEELIN' ALL THEIR DREAMS ARE ABOUT TO COME TRUE.
I'M SORRY, I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE EVERYONE'S SO *CALM*...!
WHAT YOU WANNA DO? TRY HIDIN' FROM 'EM?
EVEN IF ONE COULD, I FOR ONE AM NOT INCLINED. IT IS A THING THAT MUST BE FACED EVENTUALLY, PETIT HUGHIE.
OH, FUCK ME.
ANYONE LIVES ANYWHERE ELSE IS A CUNT.
SO IS NOW GOOD?


OR SHOULD WE COME BACK ANOTHER TIME?
next: THE FIRST CASUALTY

FIFTY-NINE
DA RI CK 2011

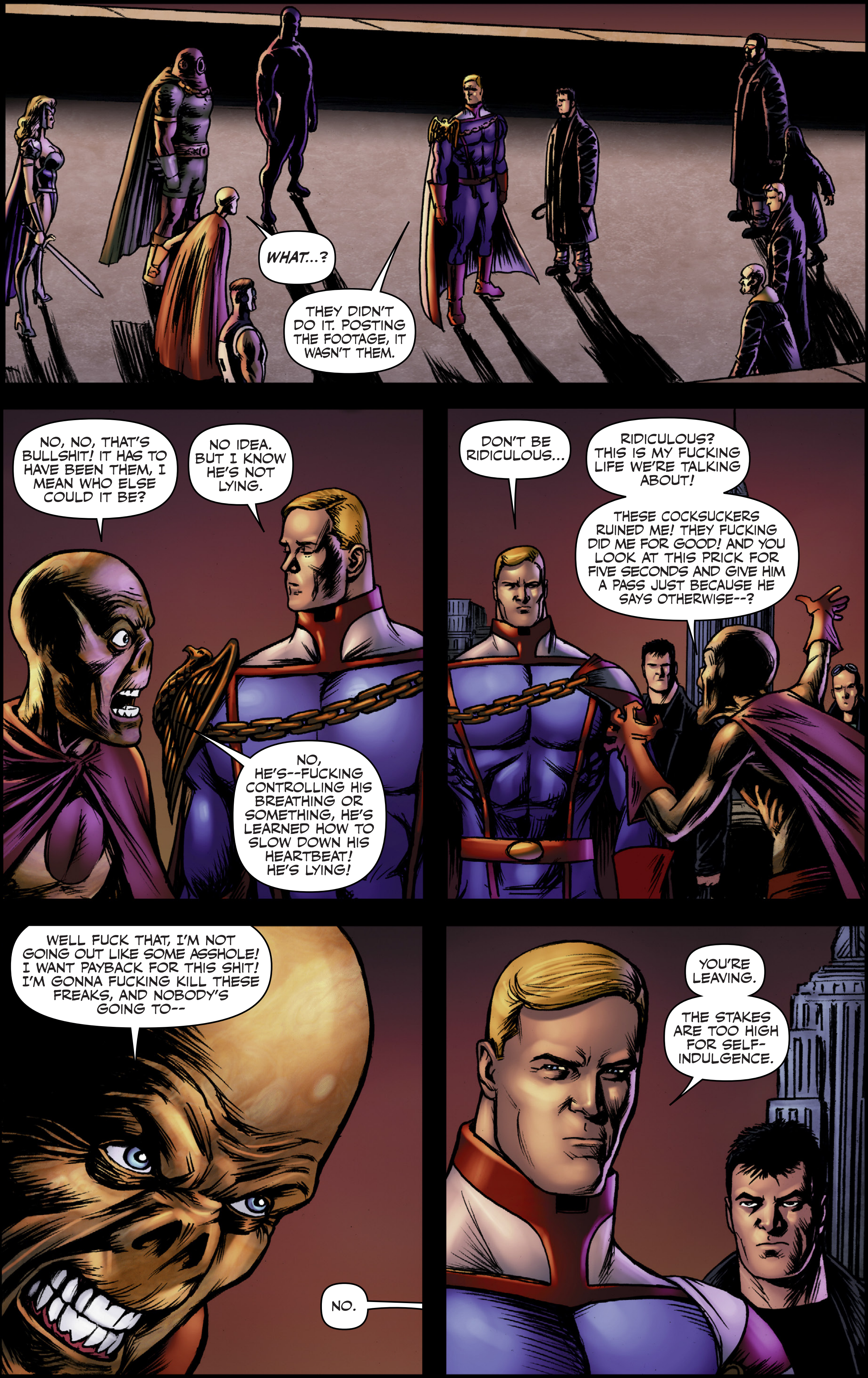


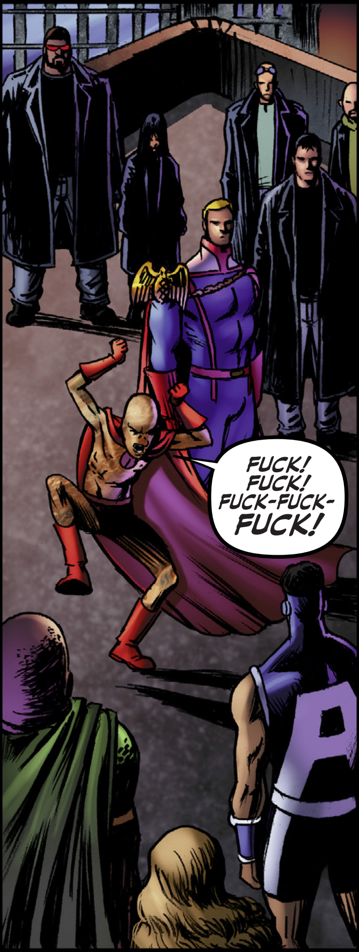
Darick Robertson's rough pencils for the cover to #59

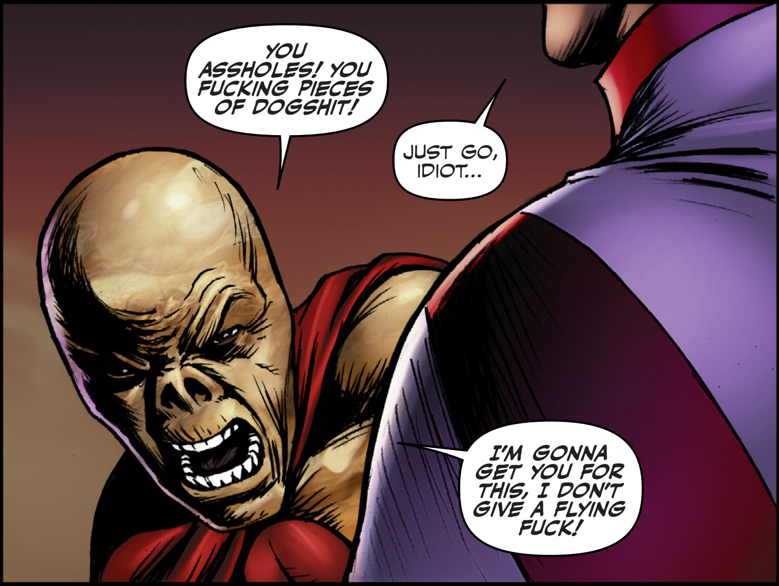

HMH.
HE'S TELLING THE TRUTH.

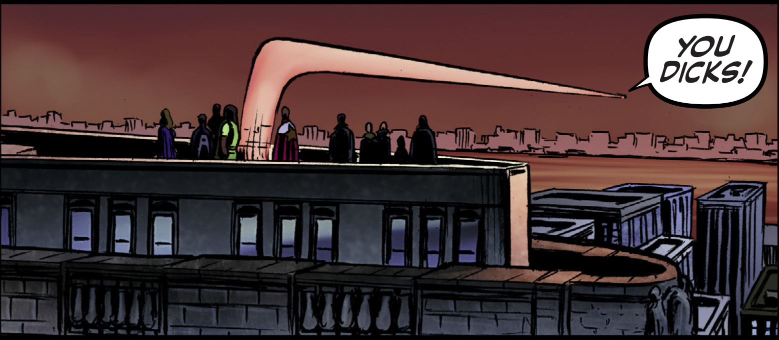
THE BIG RIDE

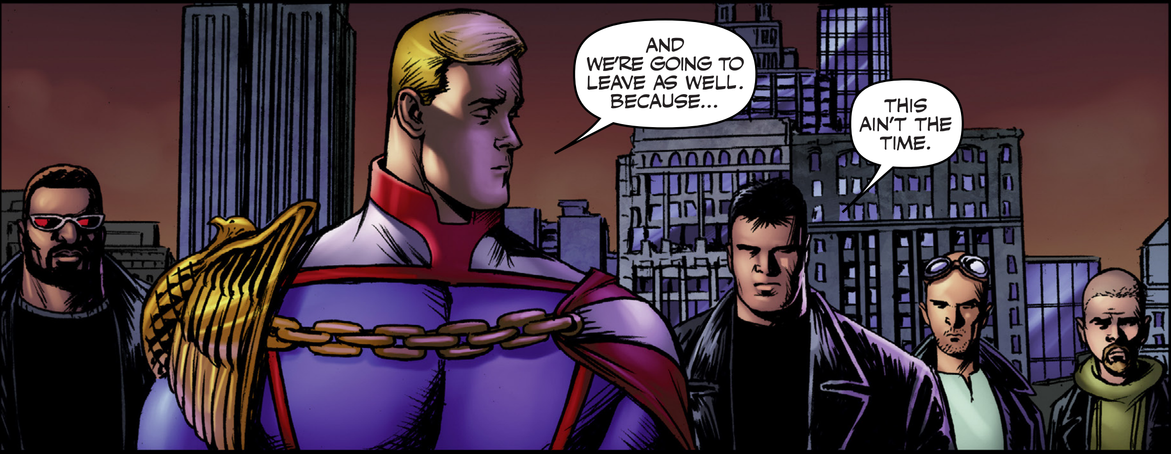
conclusion

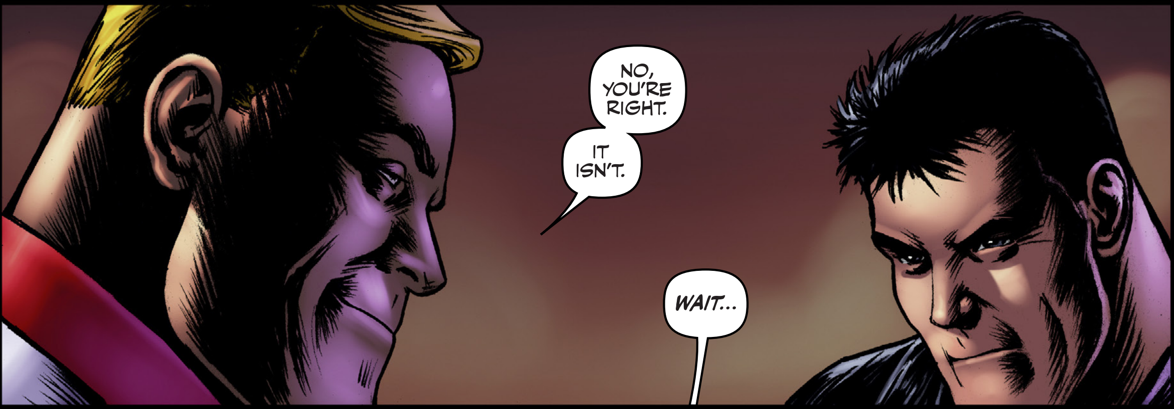

WHAT...?
THEY DIDN'T DO IT. POSTING THE FOOTAGE, IT WASN'T THEM.
NO, NO, THAT'S BULLSHIT! IT HAS TO HAVE BEEN THEM, I MEAN WHO ELSE COULD IT BE?
NO IDEA. BUT I KNOW HE'S NOT LYING.
NO, HE'S--FUCKING CONTROLLING HIS BREATHING OR SOMETHING, HE'S LEARNED HOW TO SLOW DOWN HIS HEARTBEAT! HE'S LYING!
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS...
RIDICULOUS? THIS IS MY FUCKING LIFE WE'RE TALKING ABOUT!
THESE COCKSUCKERS RUINED ME! THEY FUCKING DID ME FOR GOOD! AND YOU LOOK AT THIS PRICK FOR FIVE SECONDS AND GIVE HIM A PASS JUST BECAUSE HE SAYS OTHERWISE--?
WELL FUCK THAT, I'M NOT GOING OUT LIKE SOME ASSHOLE! I WANT PAYBACK FOR THIS SHIT! I'M GONNA FUCKING KILL THESE FREAKS, AND NOBODY'S GOING TO--
NO.
YOU'RE LEAVING.
THE STAKES ARE TOO HIGH FOR SELF-INDULGENCE.

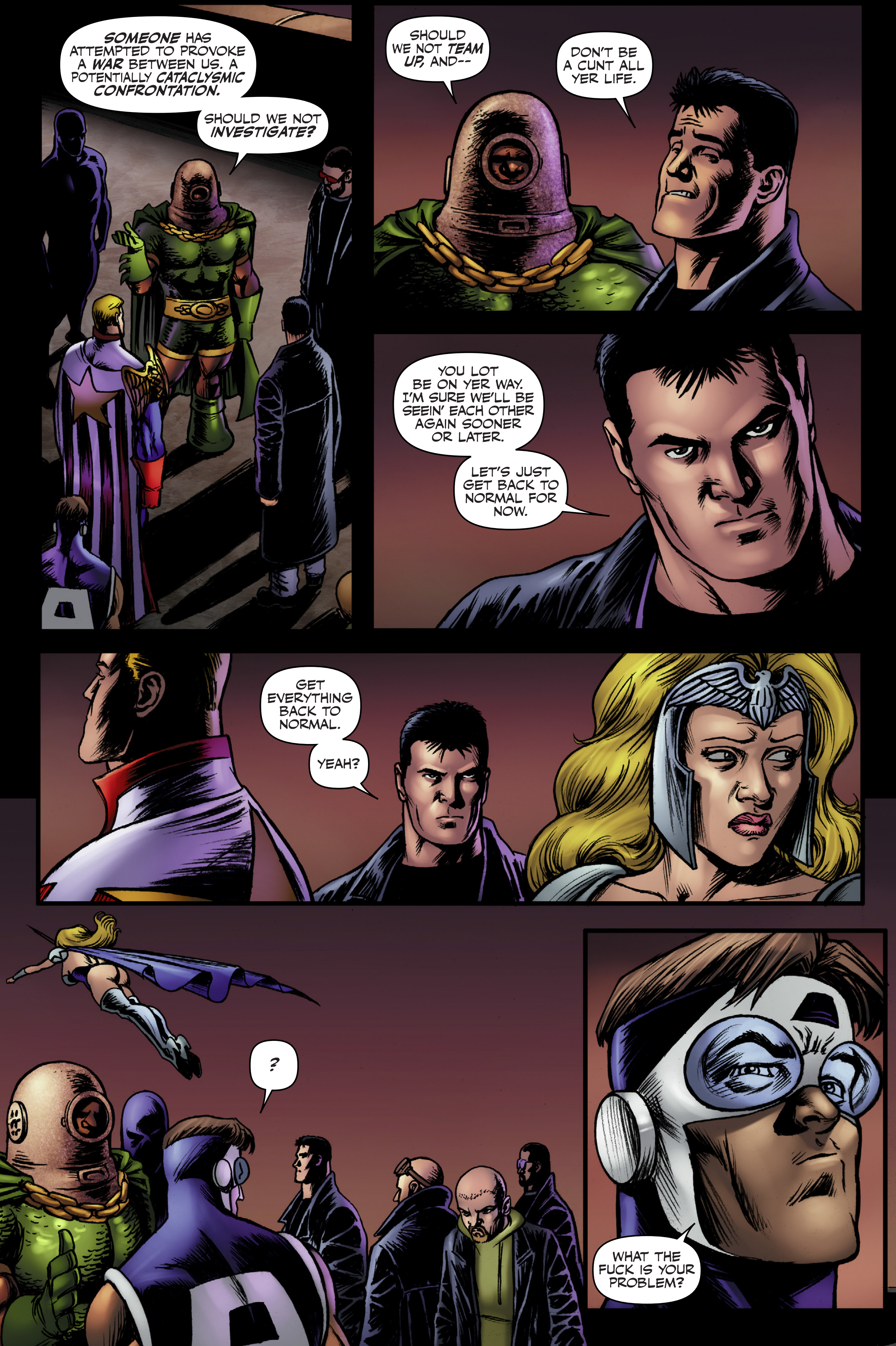

FUCK! FUCK! FUCK-FUCK-FUCK!

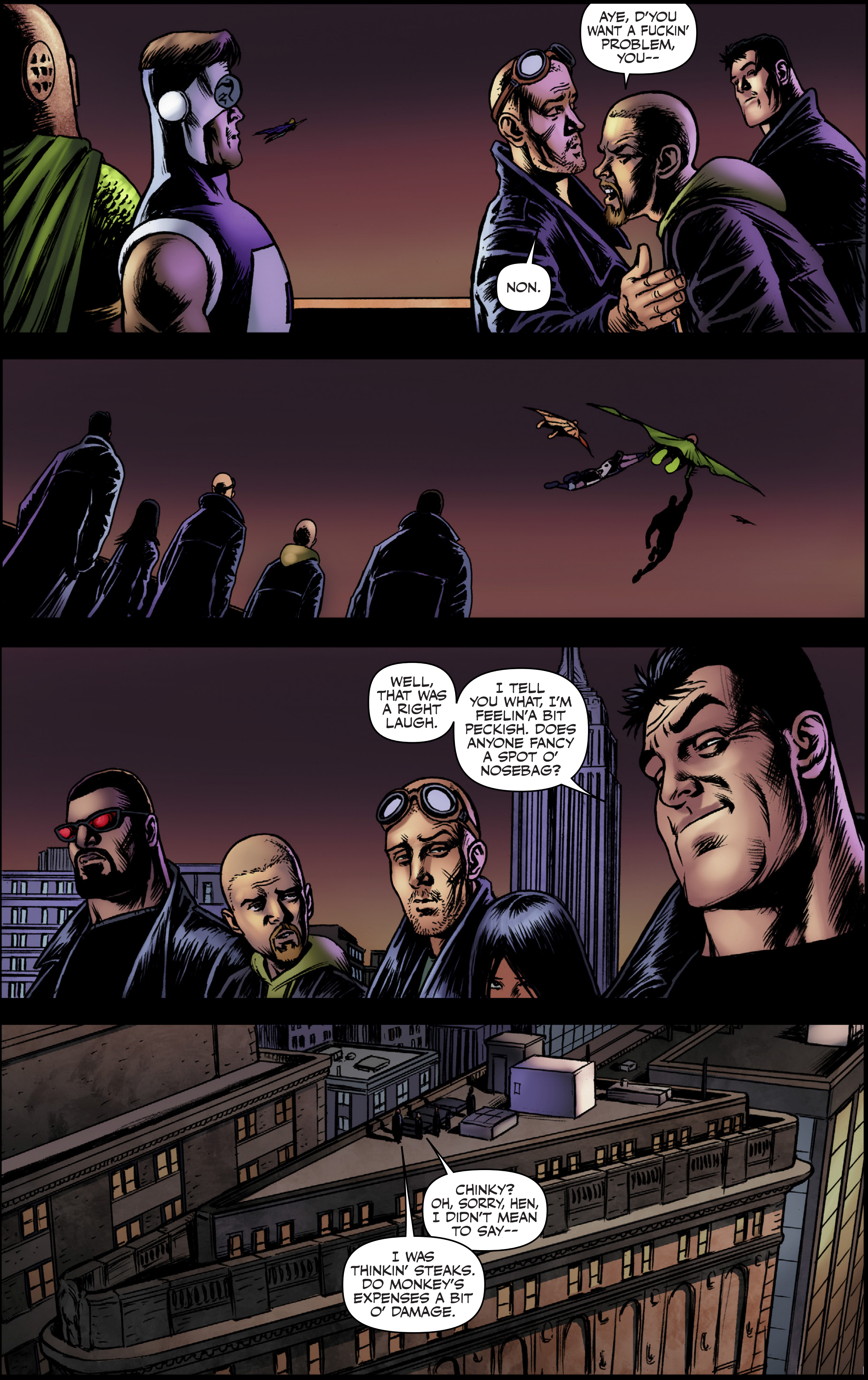

YOU ASSHOLES! YOU FUCKING PIECES OF DOGSHIT!
JUST GO, IDIOT...
I'M GONNA GET YOU FOR THIS, I DON'T GIVE A FLYING FUCK!

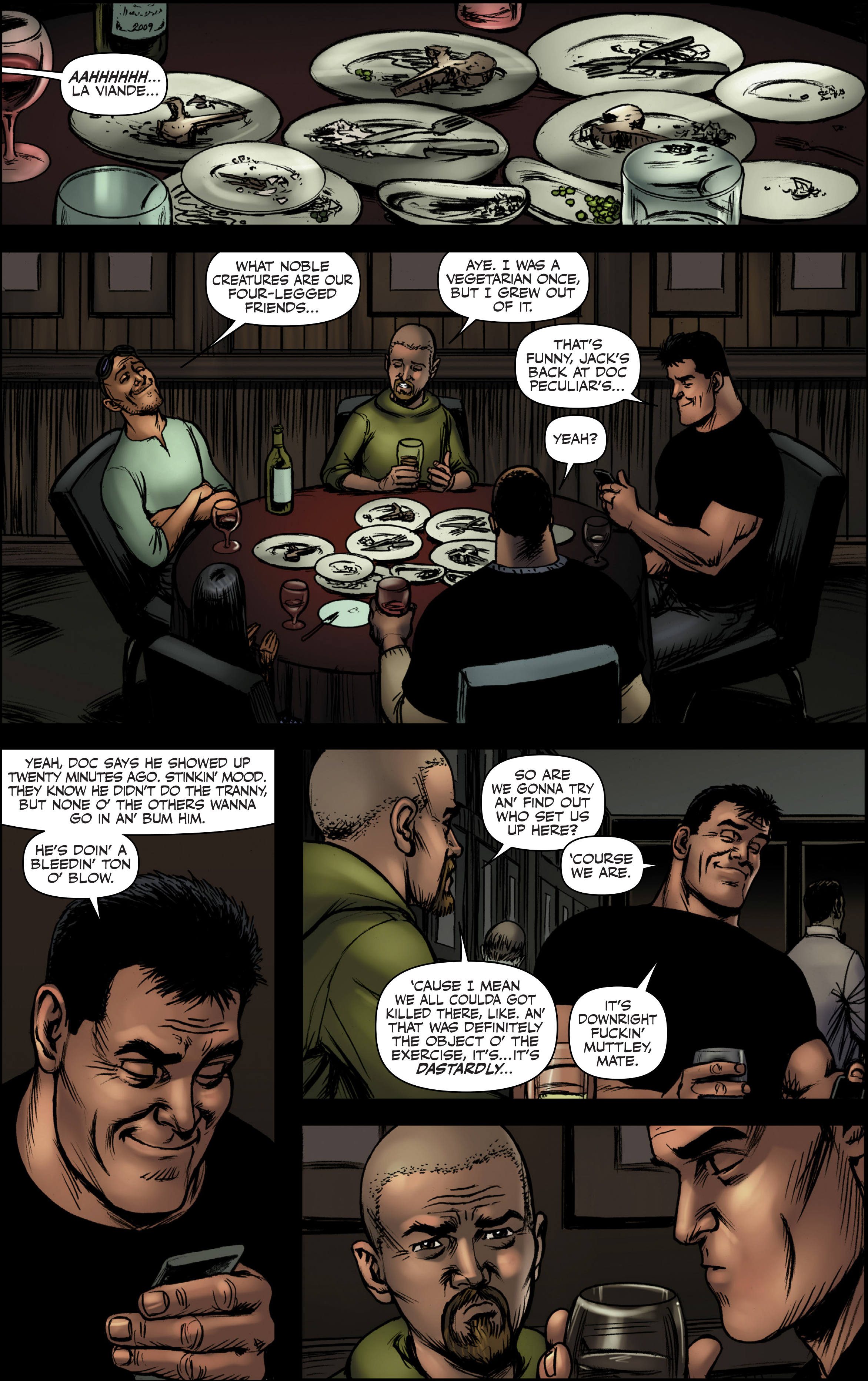

YOU DICKS!

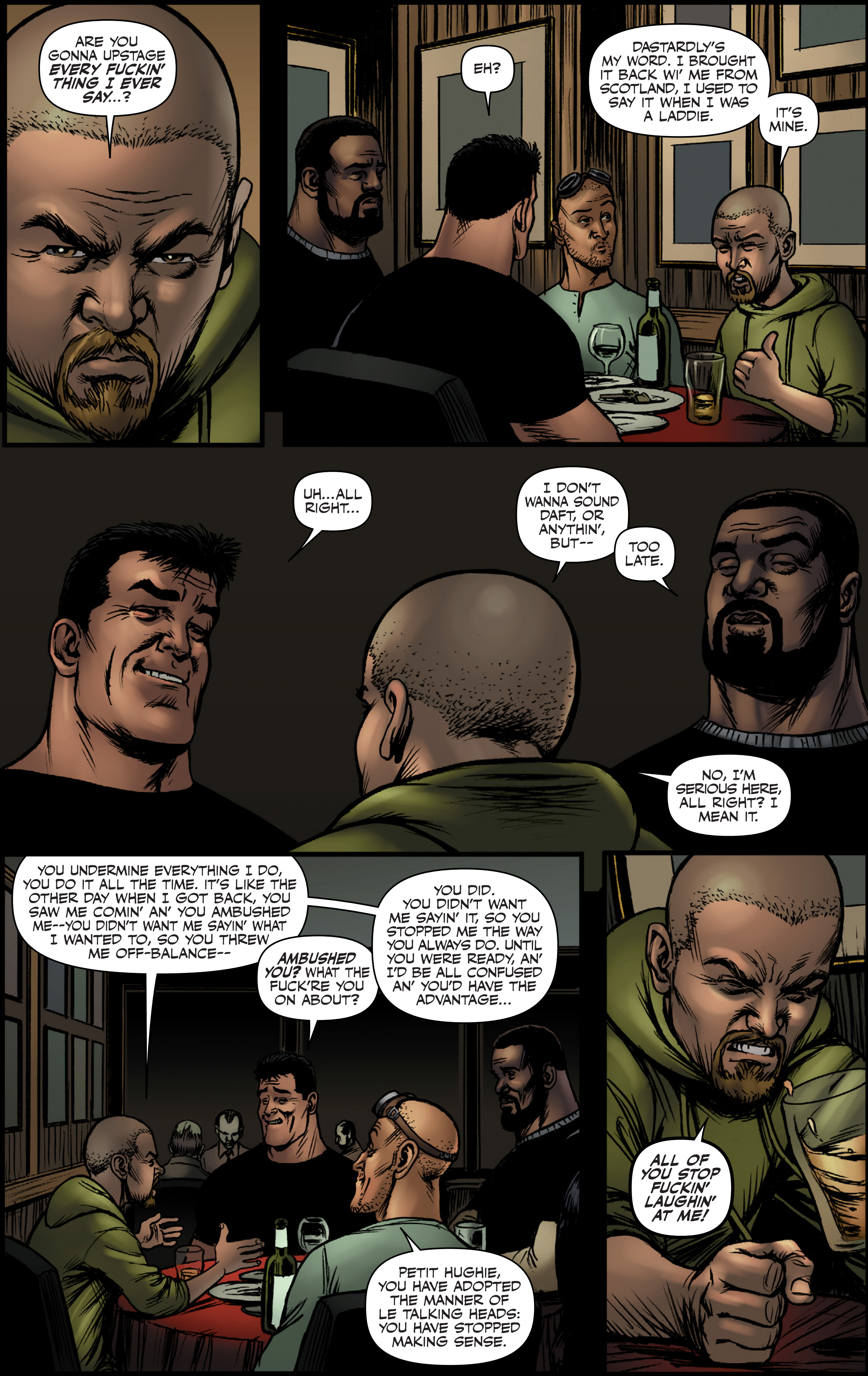

AND WE'RE GOING TO LEAVE AS WELL. BECAUSE...
THIS AIN'T THE TIME.

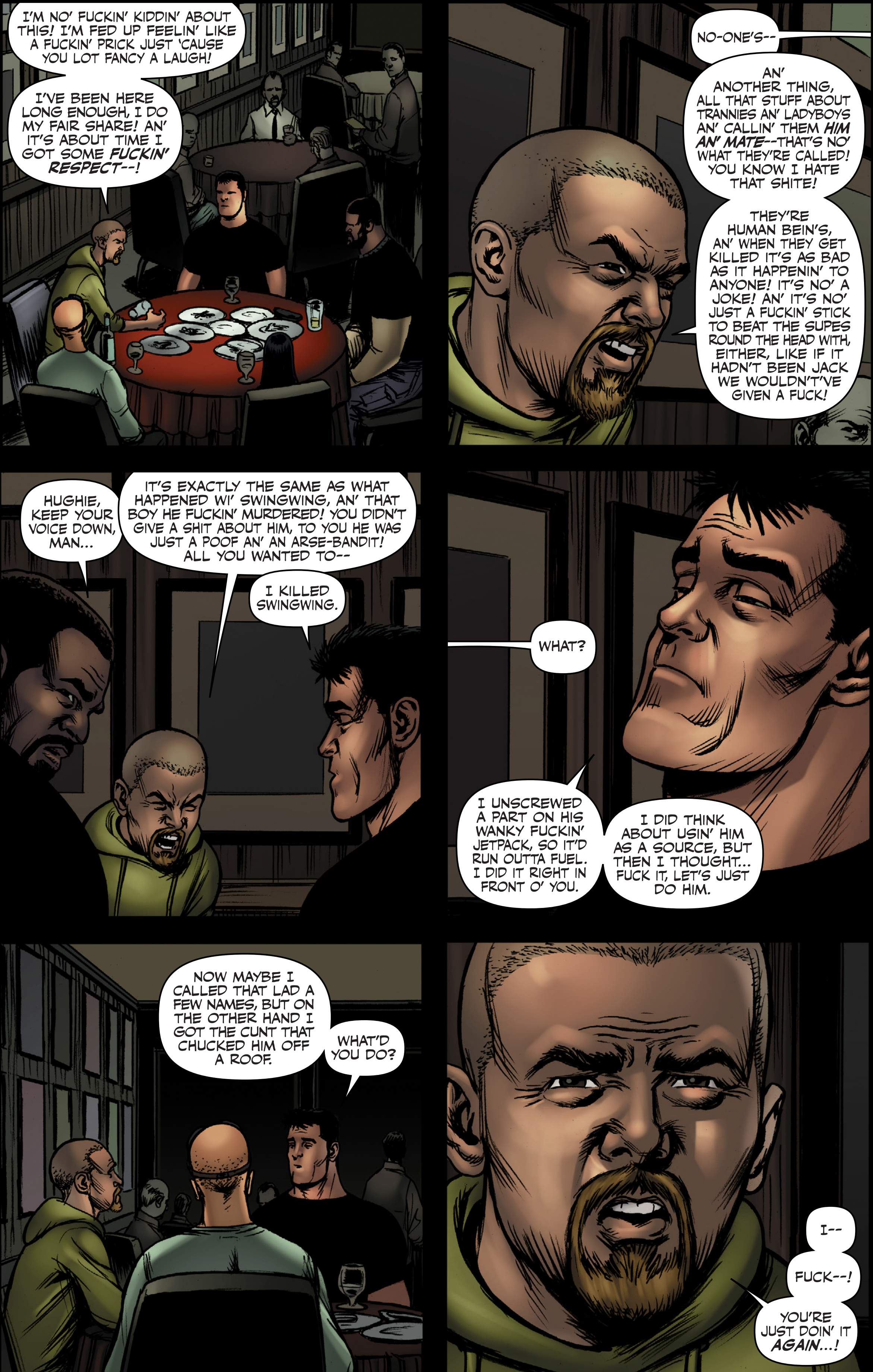

NO, YOU'RE RIGHT.
IT ISN'T.
WAIT...

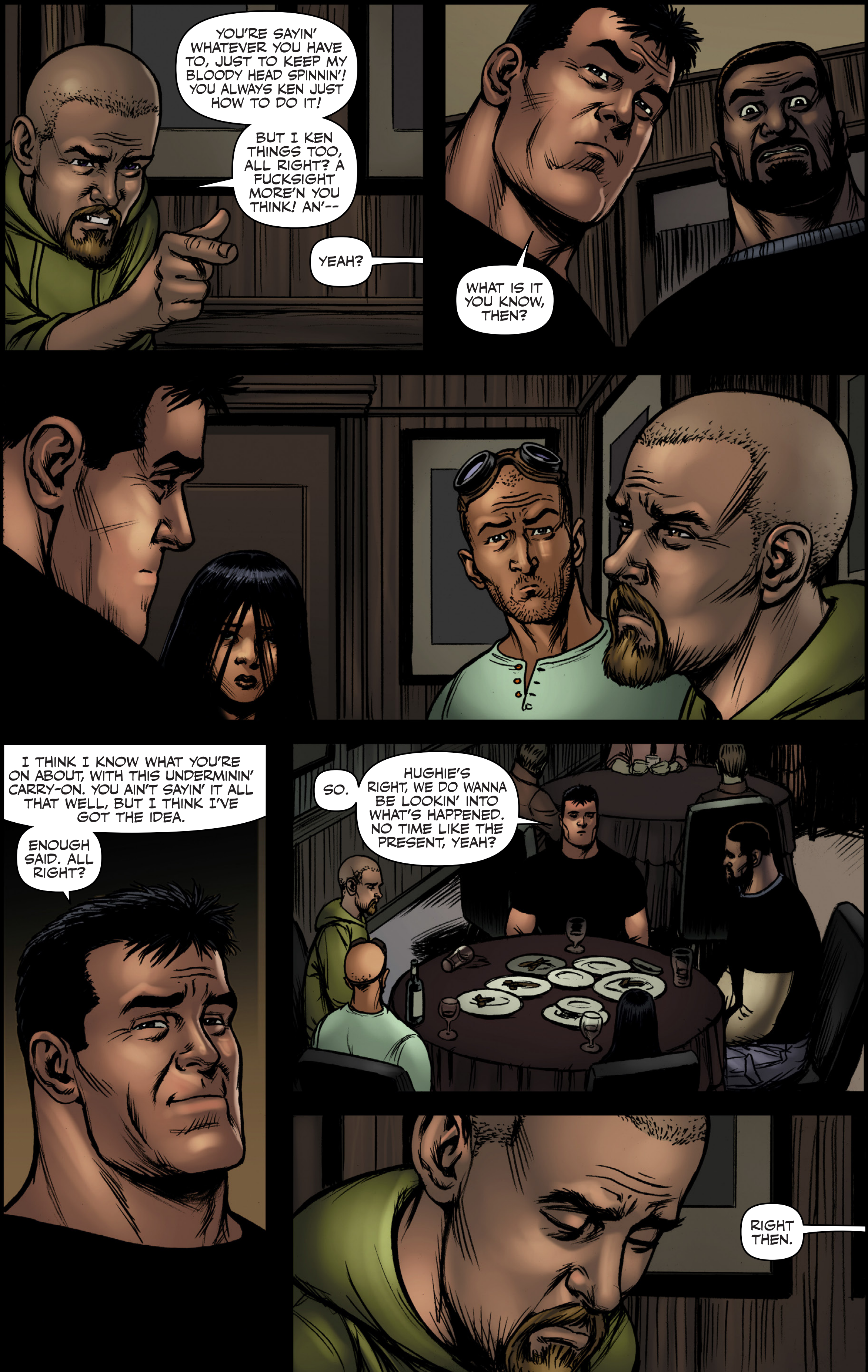

SOMEONE HAS ATTEMPTED TO PROVOKE A WAR BETWEEN US. A POTENTIALLY CATACLYSMIC CONFRONTATION.
SHOULD WE NOT INVESTIGATE?
SHOULD WE NOT TEAM UP, AND--
DON'T BE A CUNT ALL YER LIFE.
YOU LOT BE ON YER WAY. I'M SURE WE'LL BE SEEIN' EACH OTHER AGAIN SOONER OR LATER.
LET'S JUST GET BACK TO NORMAL FOR NOW.
GET EVERYTHING BACK TO NORMAL.
YEAH?
?
WHAT THE FUCK IS YOUR PROBLEM?

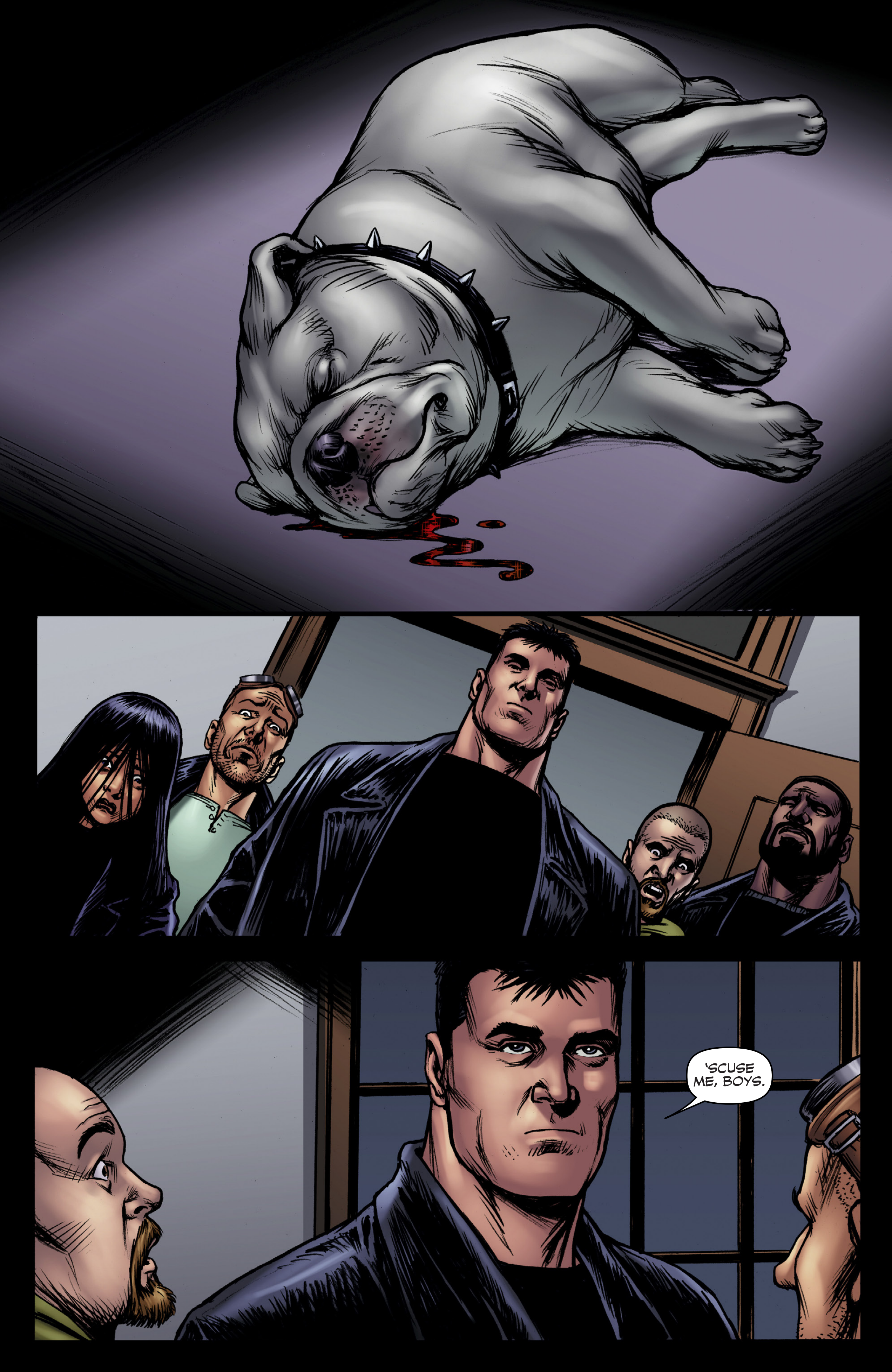

AYE, D'YOU WANT A FUCKIN' PROBLEM, YOU--
NON.
WELL, THAT WAS A RIGHT LAUGH.
I TELL YOU WHAT, I'M FEELIN'A BIT PECKISH. DOES ANYONE FANCY A SPOT O' NOSEBAG?
CHINKY? OH, SORRY, HEN, I DIDN'T MEAN TO SAY--
I WAS THINKIN' STEAKS. DO MONKEY'S EXPENSES A BIT O' DAMAGE.

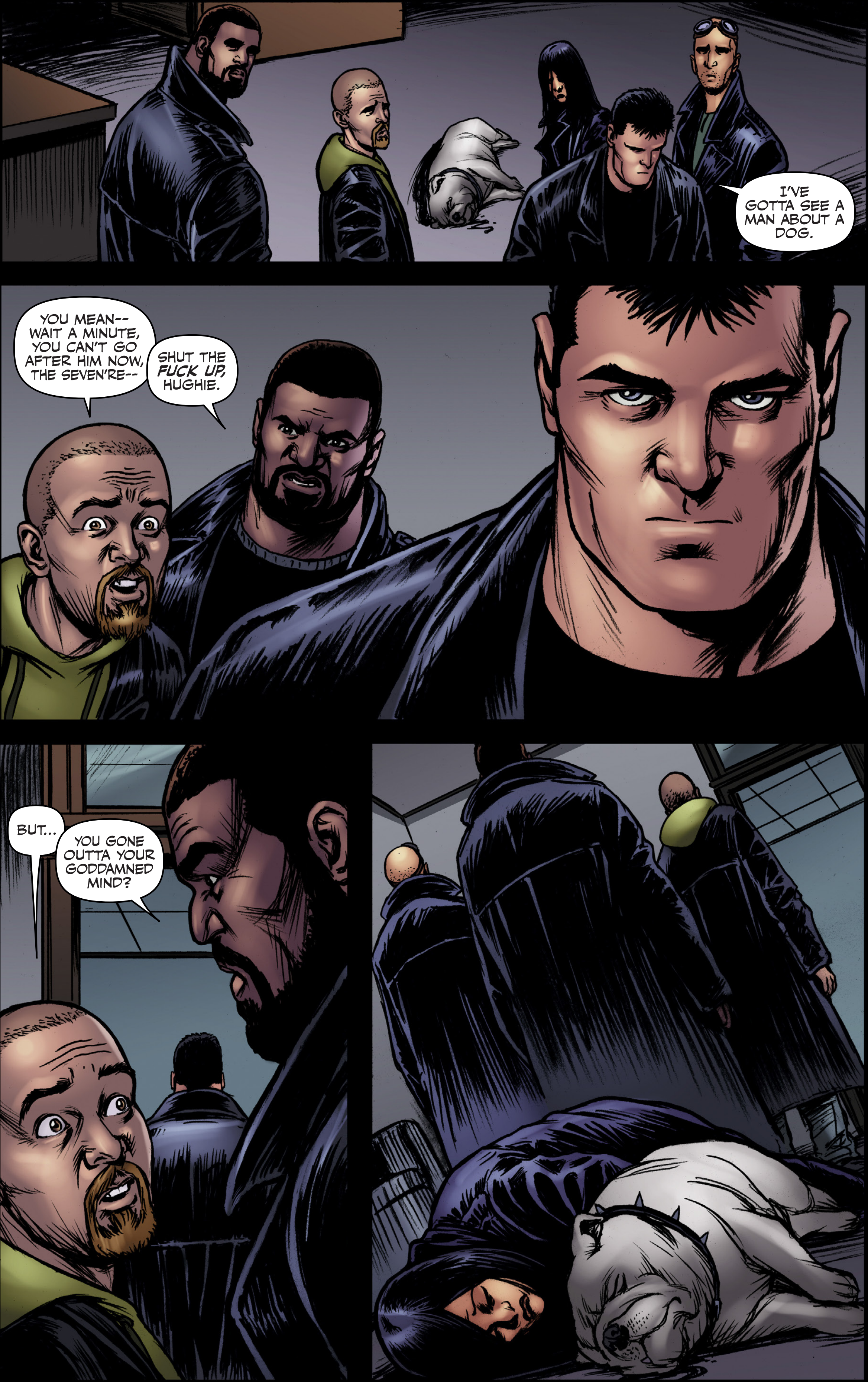

2009
AAHHHHHH... LA VIANDE...
WHAT NOBLE CREATURES ARE OUR FOUR-LEGGED FRIENDS...
AYE. I WAS A VEGETARIAN ONCE, BUT I GREW OUT OF IT.
THAT'S FUNNY, JACK'S BACK AT DOC PECULIAR'S...
YEAH?
YEAH, DOC SAYS HE SHOWED UP TWENTY MINUTES AGO. STINKIN' MOOD. THEY KNOW HE DIDN'T DO THE TRANNY, BUT NONE O' THE OTHERS WANNA GO IN AN' BUM HIM.
HE'S DOIN' A BLEEDIN' TON O' BLOW.
SO ARE WE GONNA TRY AN' FIND OUT WHO SET US UP HERE?
'COURSE WE ARE.
'CAUSE I MEAN WE ALL COULDA GOT KILLED THERE, LIKE. AN' THAT WAS DEFINITELY THE OBJECT O' THE EXERCISE, IT'S...IT'S *DASTARDLY*...
IT'S DOWNRIGHT FUCKIN' MUTTLEY, MATE.

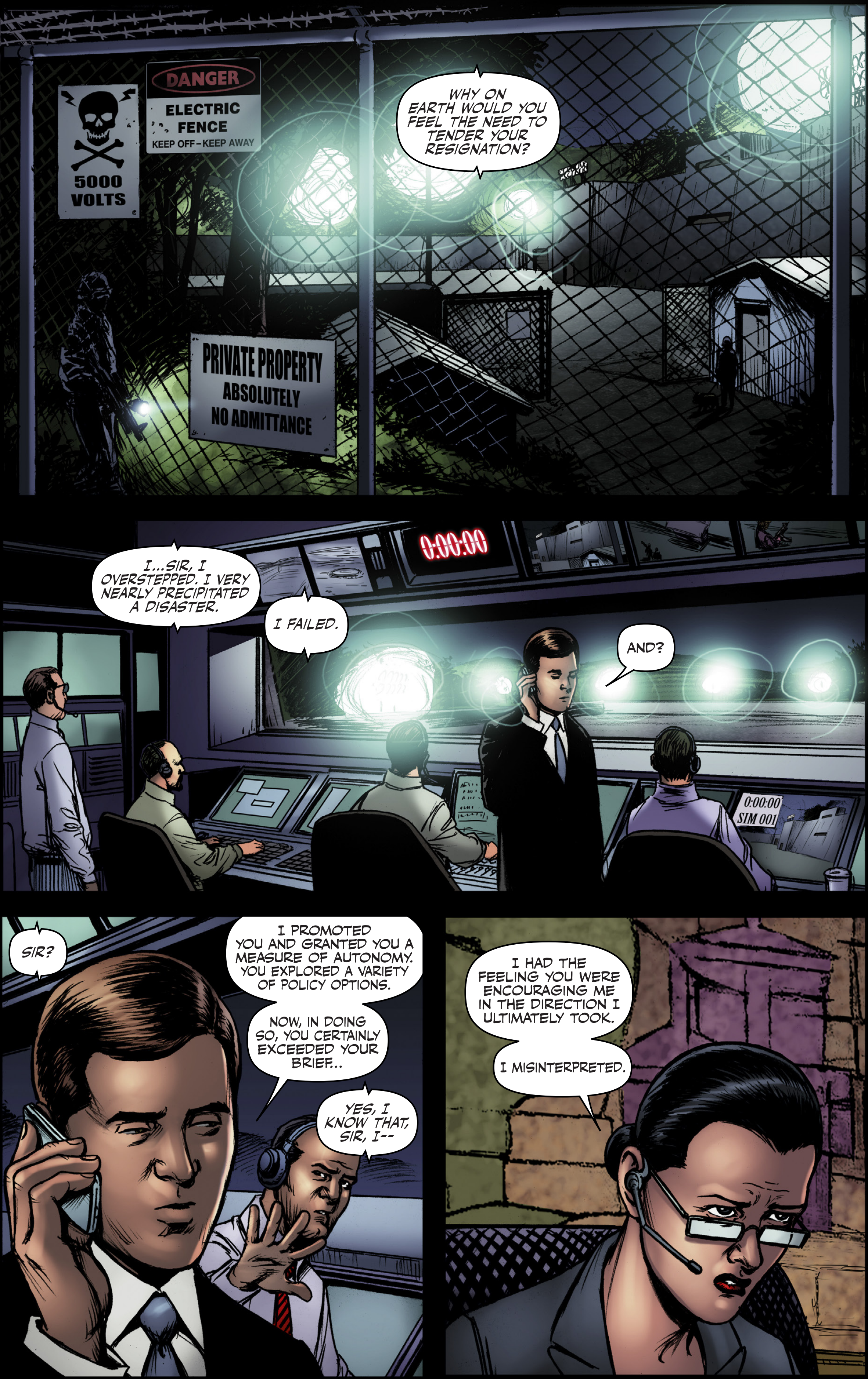

ARE YOU GONNA UPSTAGE *EVERY FUCKIN' THING I EVER SAY...?*
EH?
DASTARDLY'S MY WORD. I BROUGHT IT BACK WI' ME FROM SCOTLAND, I USED TO SAY IT WHEN I WAS A LADDIE.
IT'S MINE.
UH...ALL RIGHT...
I DON'T WANNA SOUND DAFT, OR ANYTHIN', BUT--
TOO LATE.
NO, I'M SERIOUS HERE, ALL RIGHT? I MEAN IT.
YOU UNDERMINE EVERYTHING I DO, YOU DO IT ALL THE TIME. IT'S LIKE THE OTHER DAY WHEN I GOT BACK, YOU SAW ME COMIN' AN' YOU AMBUSHED ME--YOU DIDN'T WANT ME SAYIN' WHAT I WANTED TO, SO YOU THREW ME OFF-BALANCE--
AMBUSHED YOU? WHAT THE FUCK'RE YOU ON ABOUT?
YOU DID. YOU DIDN'T WANT ME SAYIN' IT, SO YOU STOPPED ME THE WAY YOU ALWAYS DO. UNTIL YOU WERE READY, AN' I'D BE ALL CONFUSED AN' YOU'D HAVE THE ADVANTAGE...
PETIT HUGHIE, YOU HAVE ADOPTED THE MANNER OF LE TALKING HEADS: YOU HAVE STOPPED MAKING SENSE.
ALL OF YOU STOP FUCKIN' LAUGHIN' AT ME!

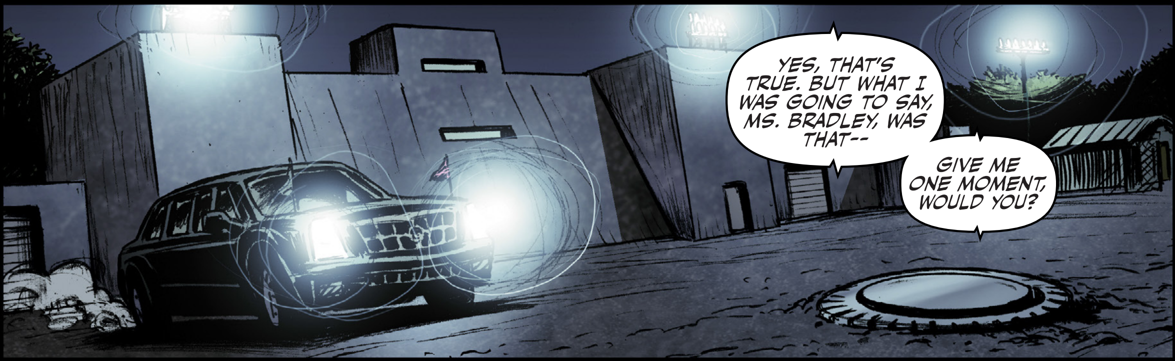

I'M NO' FUCKIN' KIDDIN' ABOUT THIS! I'M FED UP FEELIN' LIKE A FUCKIN' PRICK JUST 'CAUSE YOU LOT FANCY A LAUGH!
I'VE BEEN HERE LONG ENOUGH, I DO MY FAIR SHARE! AN' IT'S ABOUT TIME I GOT SOME ***FUCKIN' RESPECT***--!
NO-ONE'S--
AN' ANOTHER THING, ALL THAT STUFF ABOUT TRANNIES AN' LADYBOYS AN' CALLIN' THEM ***HIM AN' MATE***--THAT'S NO' WHAT THEY'RE CALLED! YOU KNOW I HATE THAT SHITE!
THEY'RE HUMAN BEIN'S, AN' WHEN THEY GET KILLED IT'S AS BAD AS IT HAPPENIN' TO ANYONE! IT'S NO' A JOKE! AN' IT'S NO' JUST A FUCKIN' STICK TO BEAT THE SUPES ROUND THE HEAD WITH, EITHER, LIKE IF IT HADN'T BEEN JACK WE WOULDN'T'VE GIVEN A FUCK!
HUGHIE, KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN, MAN...
IT'S EXACTLY THE SAME AS WHAT HAPPENED WI' SWINGWING, AN' THAT BOY HE FUCKIN' MURDERED! YOU DIDN'T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT HIM, TO YOU HE WAS JUST A POOF AN' AN ARSE-BANDIT! ALL YOU WANTED TO--
I KILLED SWINGWING.
WHAT?
I UNSCREWED A PART ON HIS WANKY FUCKIN' JETPACK, SO IT'D RUN OUTTA FUEL. I DID IT RIGHT IN FRONT O' YOU.
I DID THINK ABOUT USIN' HIM AS A SOURCE, BUT THEN I THOUGHT... FUCK IT, LET'S JUST DO HIM.
NOW MAYBE I CALLED THAT LAD A FEW NAMES, BUT ON THE OTHER HAND I GOT THE CUNT THAT CHUCKED HIM OFF A ROOF.
WHAT'D YOU DO?
I--
FUCK--!
YOU'RE JUST DOIN' IT ***AGAIN***...!

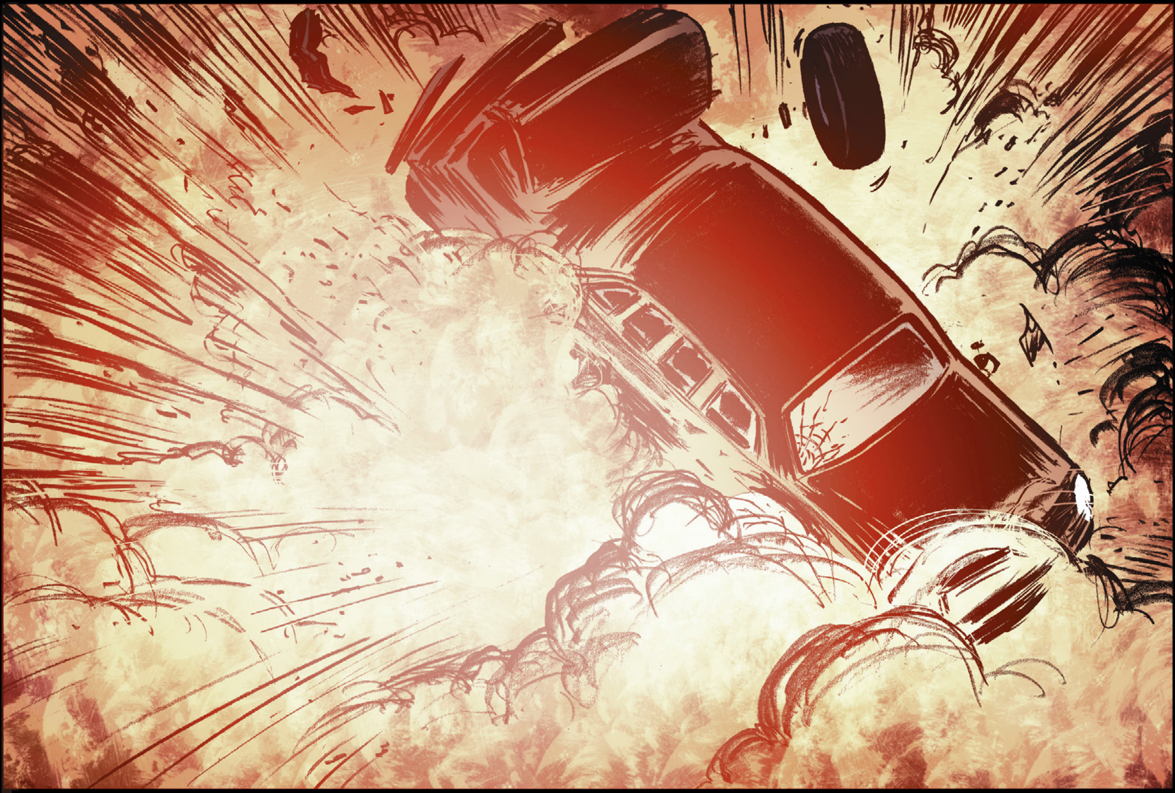

YOU'RE SAYIN' WHATEVER YOU HAVE TO, JUST TO KEEP MY BLOODY HEAD SPINNIN'! YOU ALWAYS KEN JUST HOW TO DO IT!
BUT I KEN THINGS TOO, ALL RIGHT? A FUCKSIGHT MORE'N YOU THINK! AN'--
YEAH?
WHAT IS IT YOU KNOW, THEN?
I THINK I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE ON ABOUT, WITH THIS UNDERMININ' CARRY-ON. YOU AIN'T SAYIN' IT ALL THAT WELL, BUT I THINK I'VE GOT THE IDEA.
ENOUGH SAID. ALL RIGHT?
SO.
HUGHIE'S RIGHT, WE DO WANNA BE LOOKIN' INTO WHAT'S HAPPENED. NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT, YEAH?
RIGHT THEN.

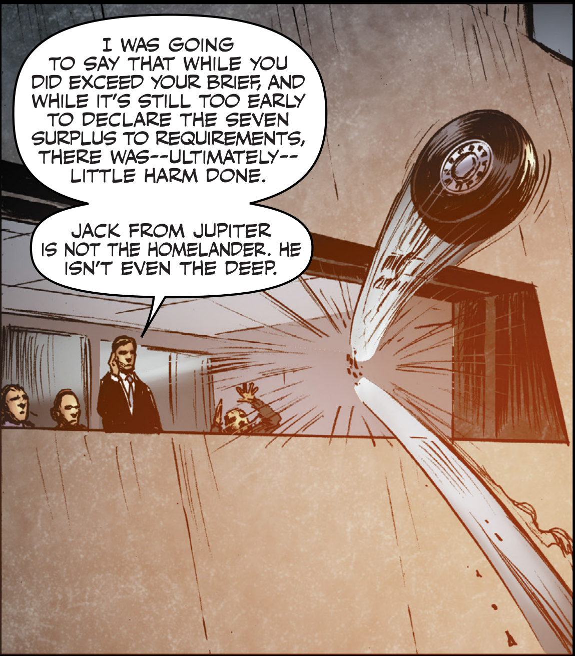

'SCUSE ME, BOYS.

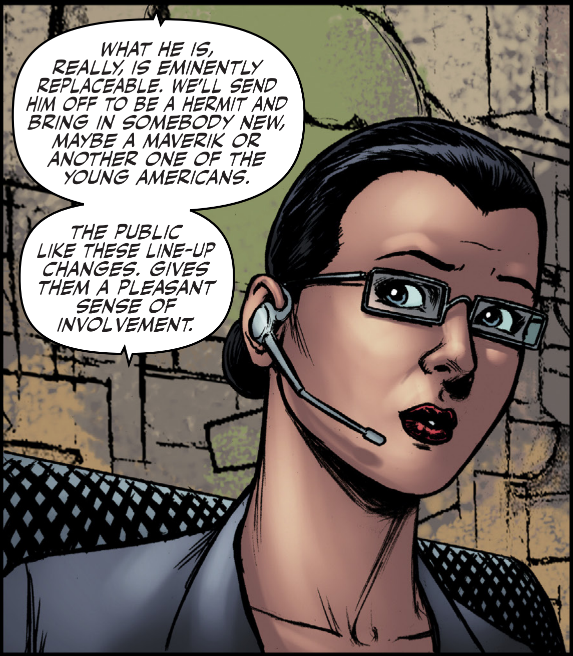

I'VE GOTTA SEE A MAN ABOUT A DOG.
YOU MEAN-- WAIT A MINUTE, YOU CAN'T GO AFTER HIM NOW, THE SEVEN'RE--
SHUT THE ***FUCK UP,*** HUGHIE.
BUT...
YOU GONE OUTTA YOUR GODDAMNED MIND?

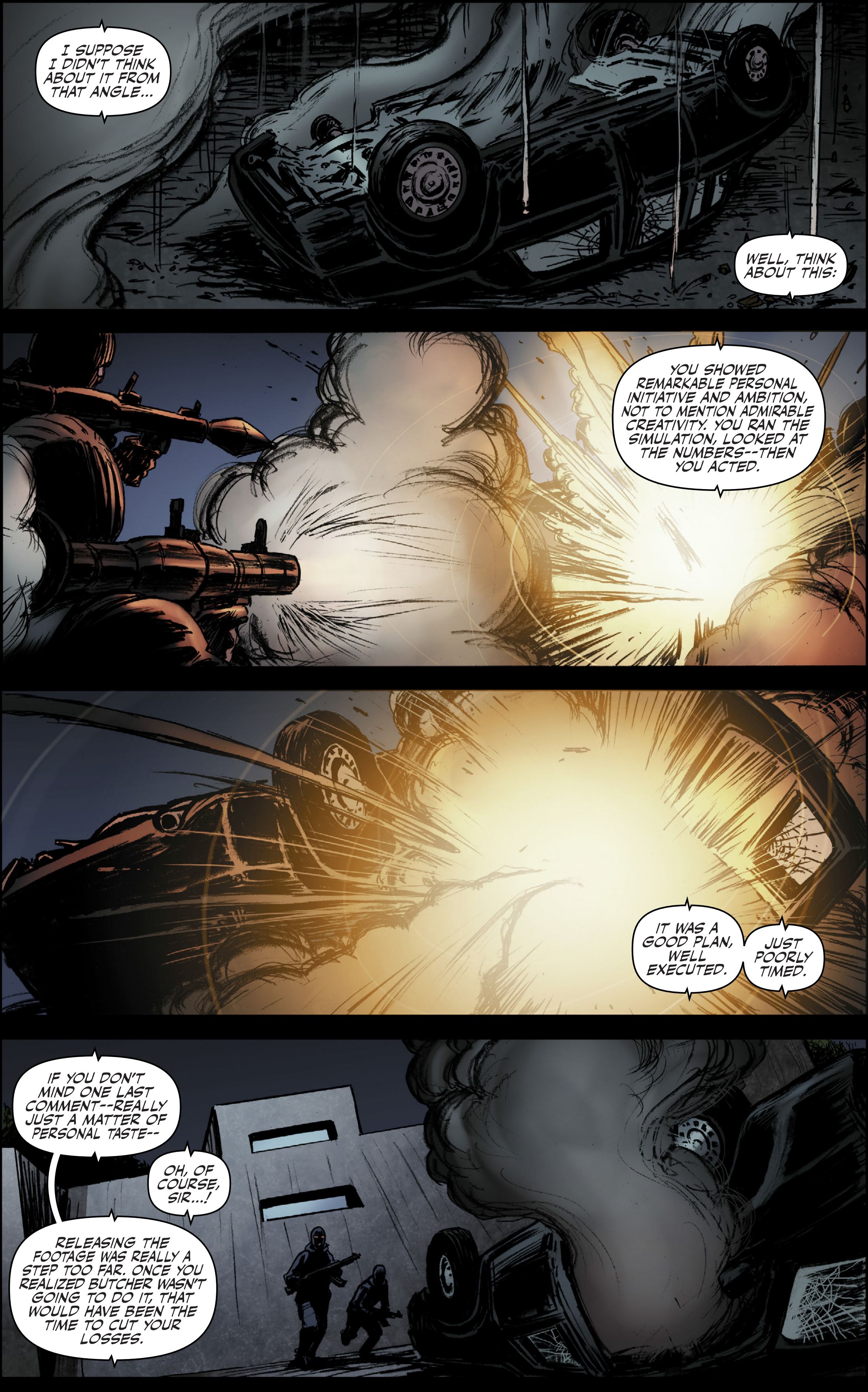

DANGER
ELECTRIC FENCE
KEEP OFF–KEEP AWAY
5000 VOLTS
PRIVATE PROPERTY
ABSOLUTELY NO ADMITTANCE
WHY ON EARTH WOULD YOU FEEL THE NEED TO TENDER YOUR RESIGNATION?
0:00:00
I...SIR, I OVERSTEPPED. I VERY NEARLY PRECIPITATED A DISASTER.
I FAILED.
AND?
0:00:00
SIM 001
SIR?
I PROMOTED YOU AND GRANTED YOU A MEASURE OF AUTONOMY. YOU EXPLORED A VARIETY OF POLICY OPTIONS.
NOW, IN DOING SO, YOU CERTAINLY EXCEEDED YOUR BRIEF...
YES, I KNOW THAT, SIR, I--
I HAD THE FEELING YOU WERE ENCOURAGING ME IN THE DIRECTION I ULTIMATELY TOOK.
I MISINTERPRETED.

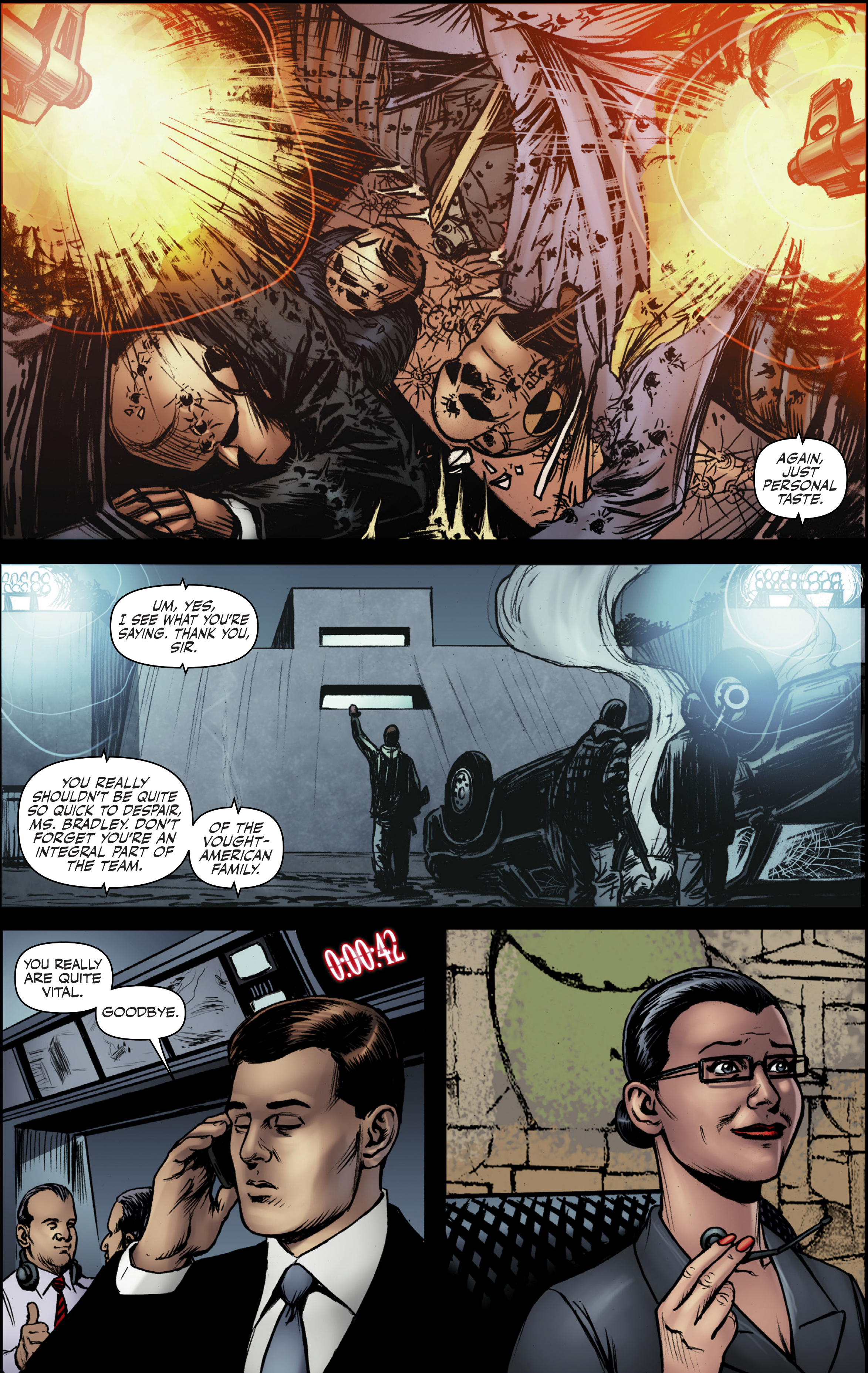

YES, THAT'S TRUE. BUT WHAT I WAS GOING TO SAY, MS. BRADLEY, WAS THAT--
GIVE ME ONE MOMENT, WOULD YOU?

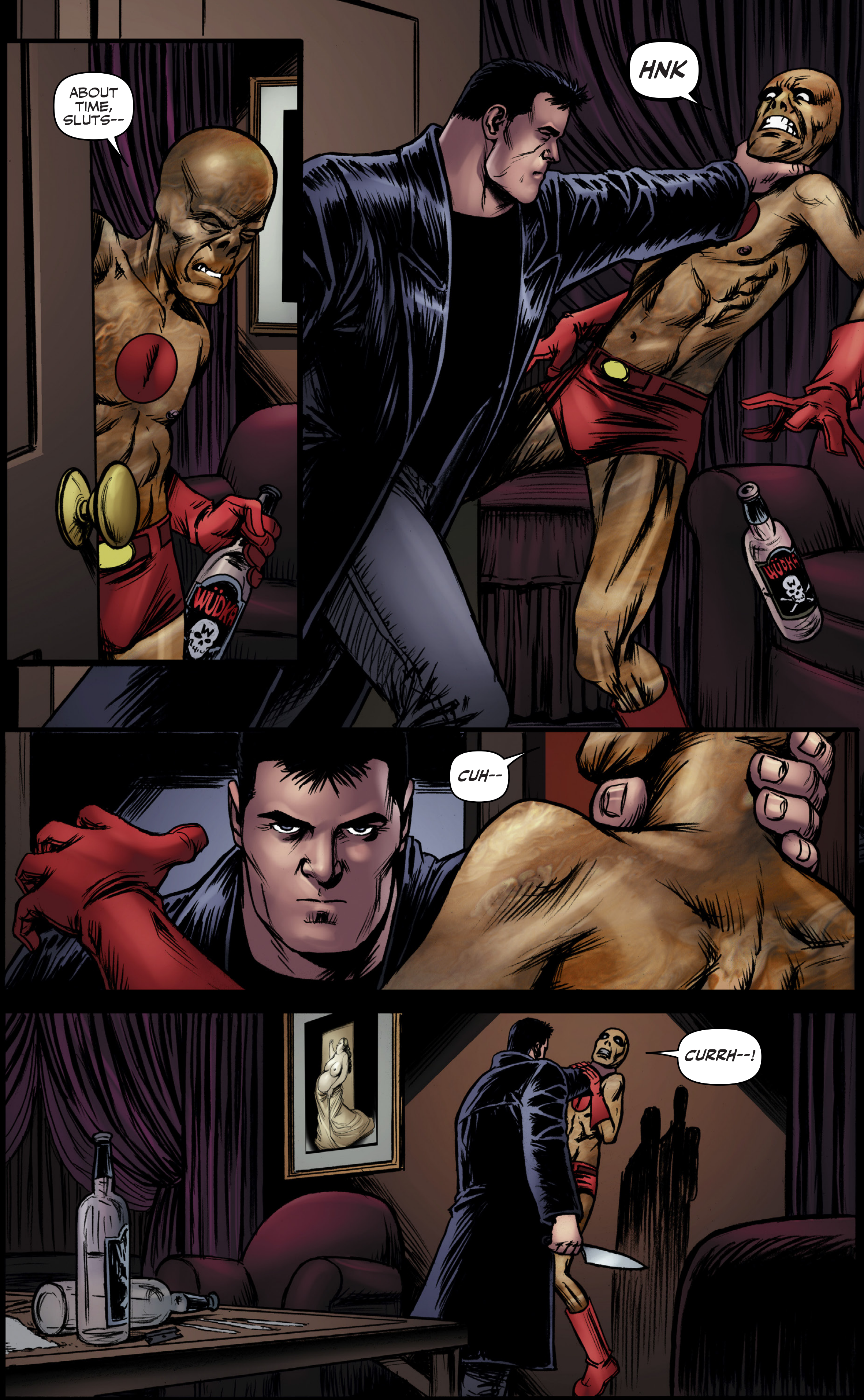


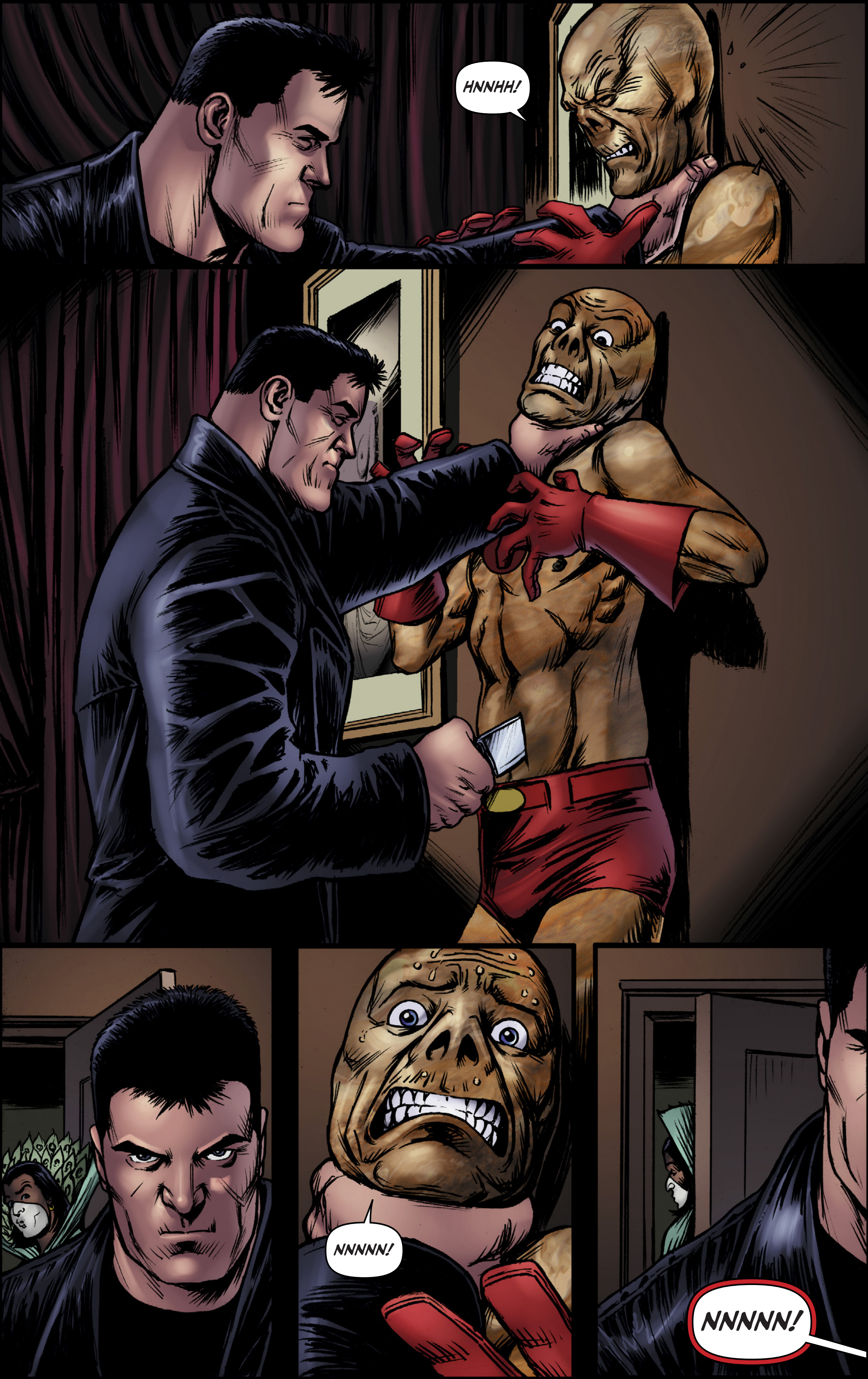

I WAS GOING TO SAY THAT WHILE YOU DID EXCEED YOUR BRIEF, AND WHILE IT'S STILL TOO EARLY TO DECLARE THE SEVEN SURPLUS TO REQUIREMENTS, THERE WAS--ULTIMATELY-- LITTLE HARM DONE.
JACK FROM JUPITER IS NOT THE HOMELANDER. HE ISN'T EVEN THE DEEP.

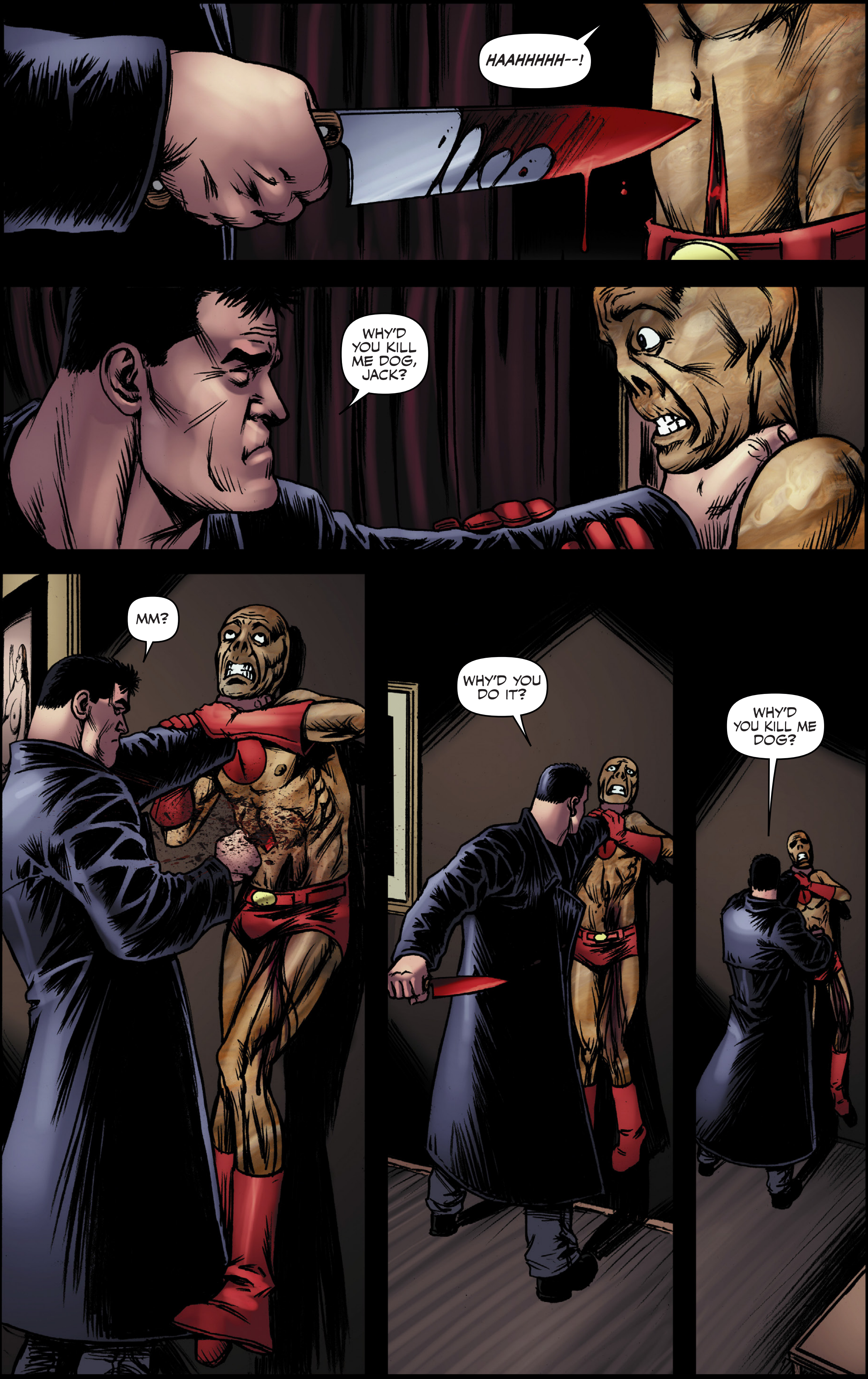

WHAT HE IS, REALLY, IS EMINENTLY REPLACEABLE. WE'LL SEND HIM OFF TO BE A HERMIT AND BRING IN SOMEBODY NEW, MAYBE A MAVERIK OR ANOTHER ONE OF THE YOUNG AMERICANS.
THE PUBLIC LIKE THESE LINE-UP CHANGES. GIVES THEM A PLEASANT SENSE OF INVOLVEMENT.

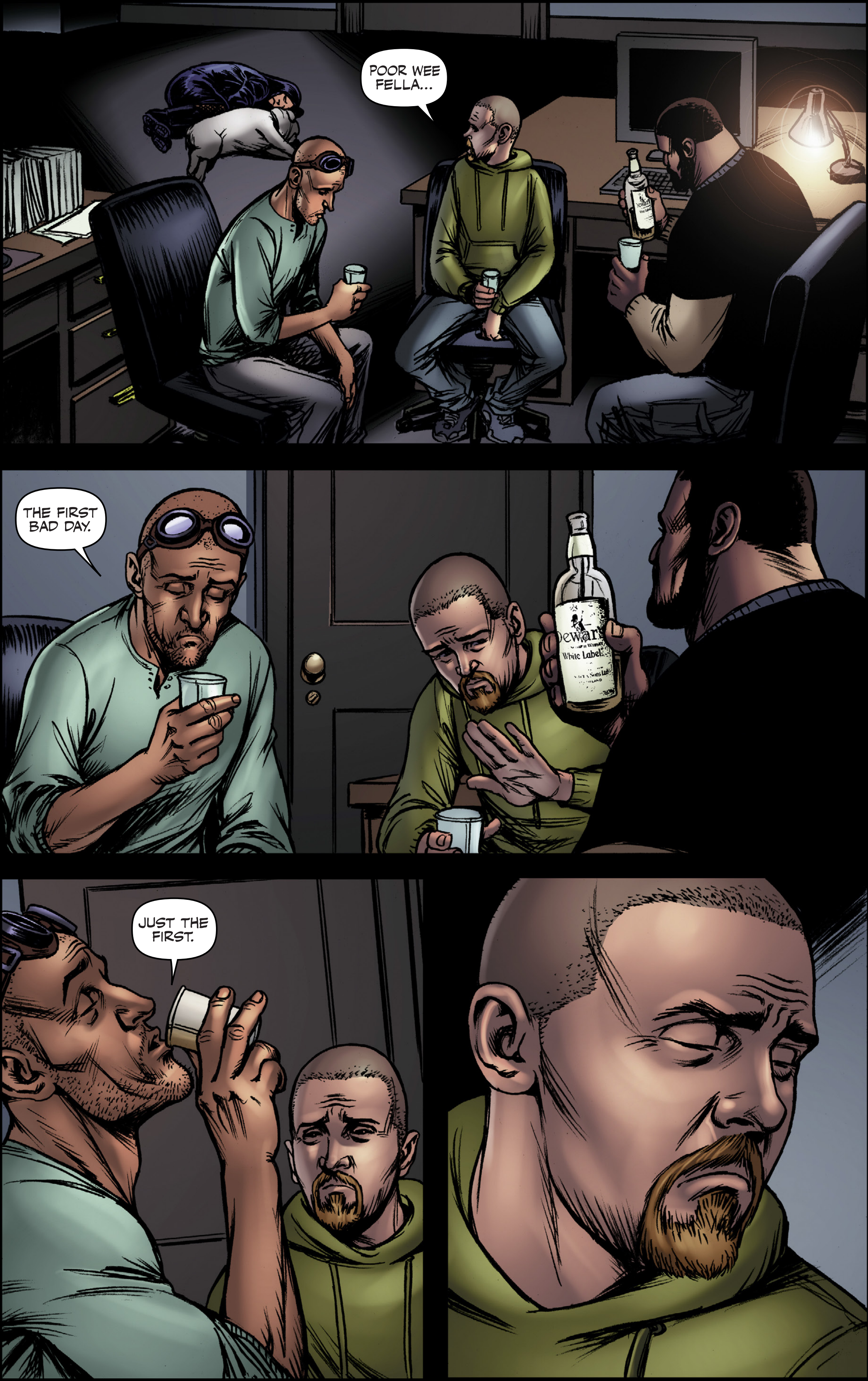

I SUPPOSE I DIDN'T THINK ABOUT IT FROM THAT ANGLE...
WELL, THINK ABOUT THIS:
YOU SHOWED REMARKABLE PERSONAL INITIATIVE AND AMBITION, NOT TO MENTION ADMIRABLE CREATIVITY. YOU RAN THE SIMULATION, LOOKED AT THE NUMBERS--THEN YOU ACTED.
IT WAS A GOOD PLAN, WELL EXECUTED.
JUST POORLY TIMED.
IF YOU DON'T MIND ONE LAST COMMENT--REALLY JUST A MATTER OF PERSONAL TASTE--
OH, OF COURSE, SIR...!
RELEASING THE FOOTAGE WAS REALLY A STEP TOO FAR. ONCE YOU REALIZED BUTCHER WASN'T GOING TO DO IT, THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE TIME TO CUT YOUR LOSSES.

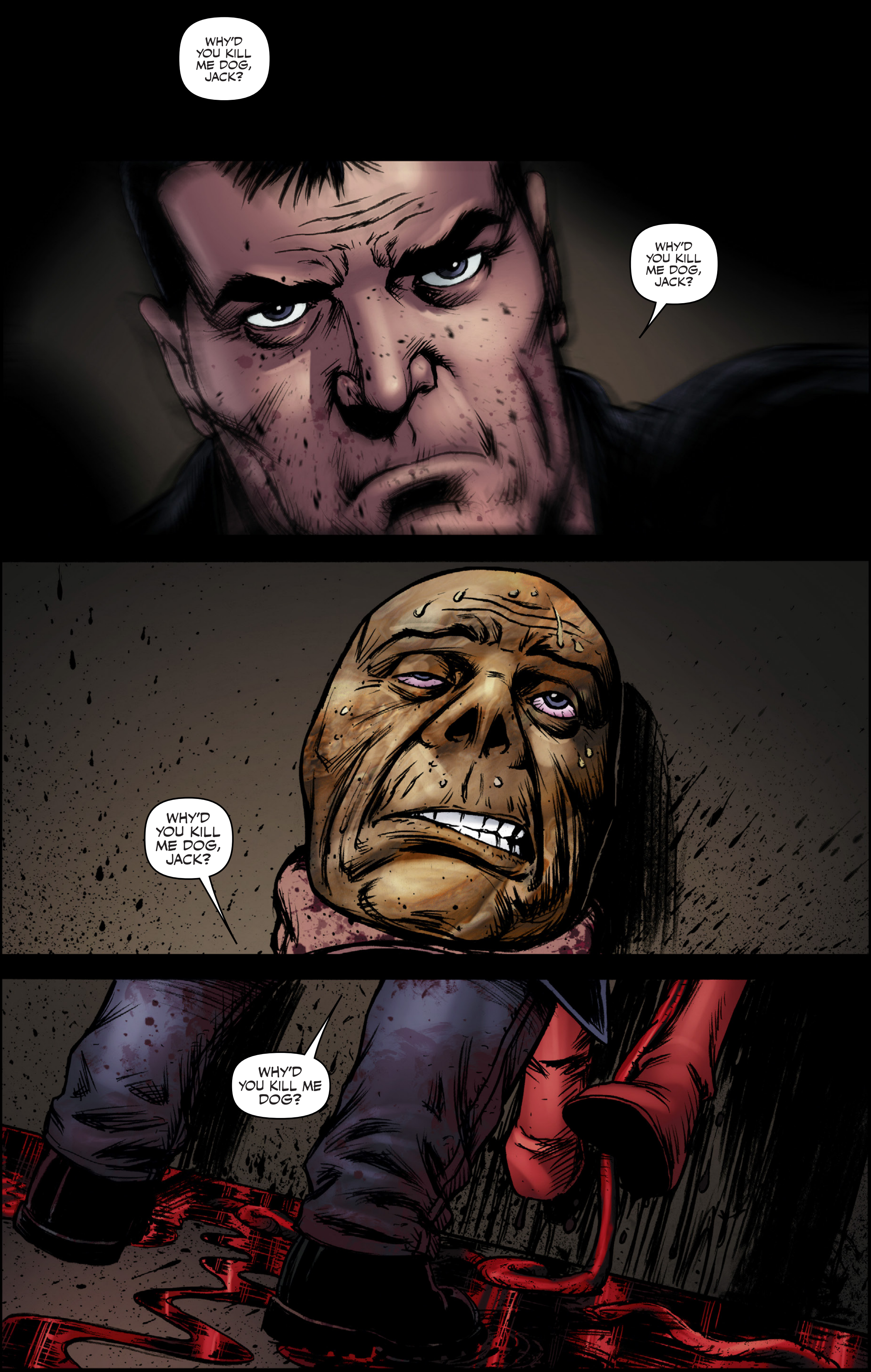

AGAIN, JUST PERSONAL TASTE.
UM, YES, I SEE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING. THANK YOU, SIR.
YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T BE QUITE SO QUICK TO DESPAIR, MS. BRADLEY. DON'T FORGET YOU'RE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE TEAM.
OF THE VOUGHT-AMERICAN FAMILY.
0:00:42
YOU REALLY ARE QUITE VITAL.
GOODBYE.


ABOUT TIME, SLUTS--
HNK
CUH--
CURRH--!


HNNHH!
NNNNN!
NNNNN!


HAAHHHHH--!
WHY'D YOU KILL ME DOG, JACK?
MM?
WHY'D YOU DO IT?
WHY'D YOU KILL ME DOG?


POOR WEE FELLA...
THE FIRST BAD DAY.
Dewar's
White Label
JUST THE FIRST.


WHY'D YOU KILL ME DOG, JACK?
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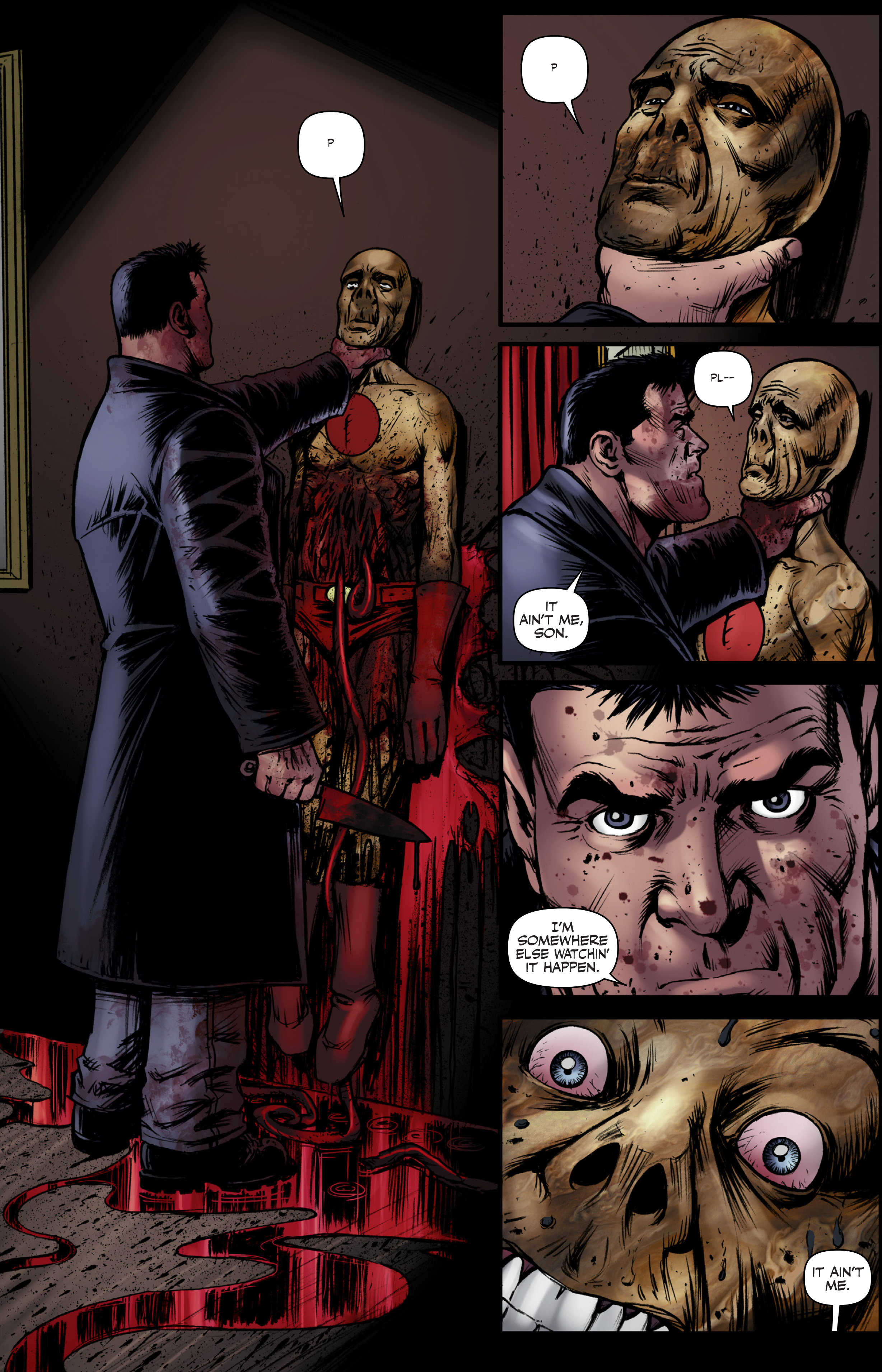
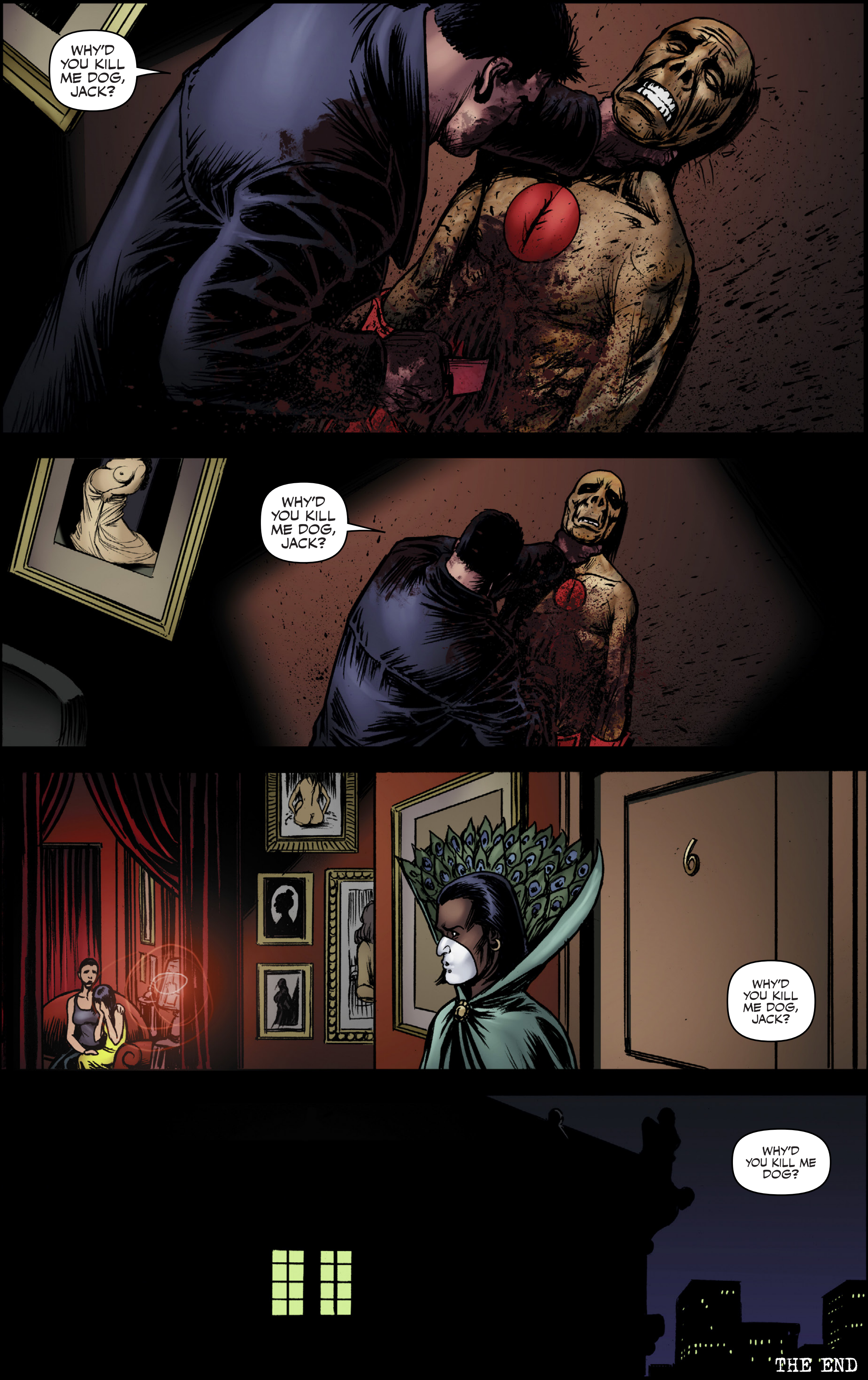
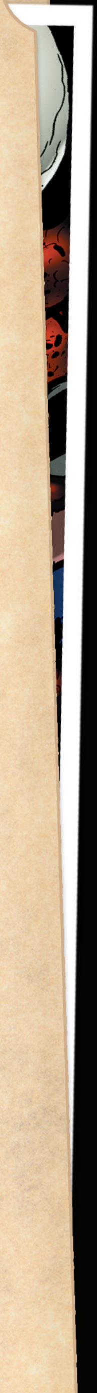
WHY'D YOU KILL ME DOG?


P
P
PL--
IT AIN'T ME, SON.
I'M SOMEWHERE ELSE WATCHIN' IT HAPPEN.
IT AIN'T ME.


WHY'D YOU KILL ME DOG, JACK?
WHY'D YOU KILL ME DOG, JACK?
WHY'D YOU KILL ME DOG, JACK?
6
WHY'D YOU KILL ME DOG?
THE END

PIN-UP GALLERY



Pin-up
art by
P.J. Holden

Pin-up
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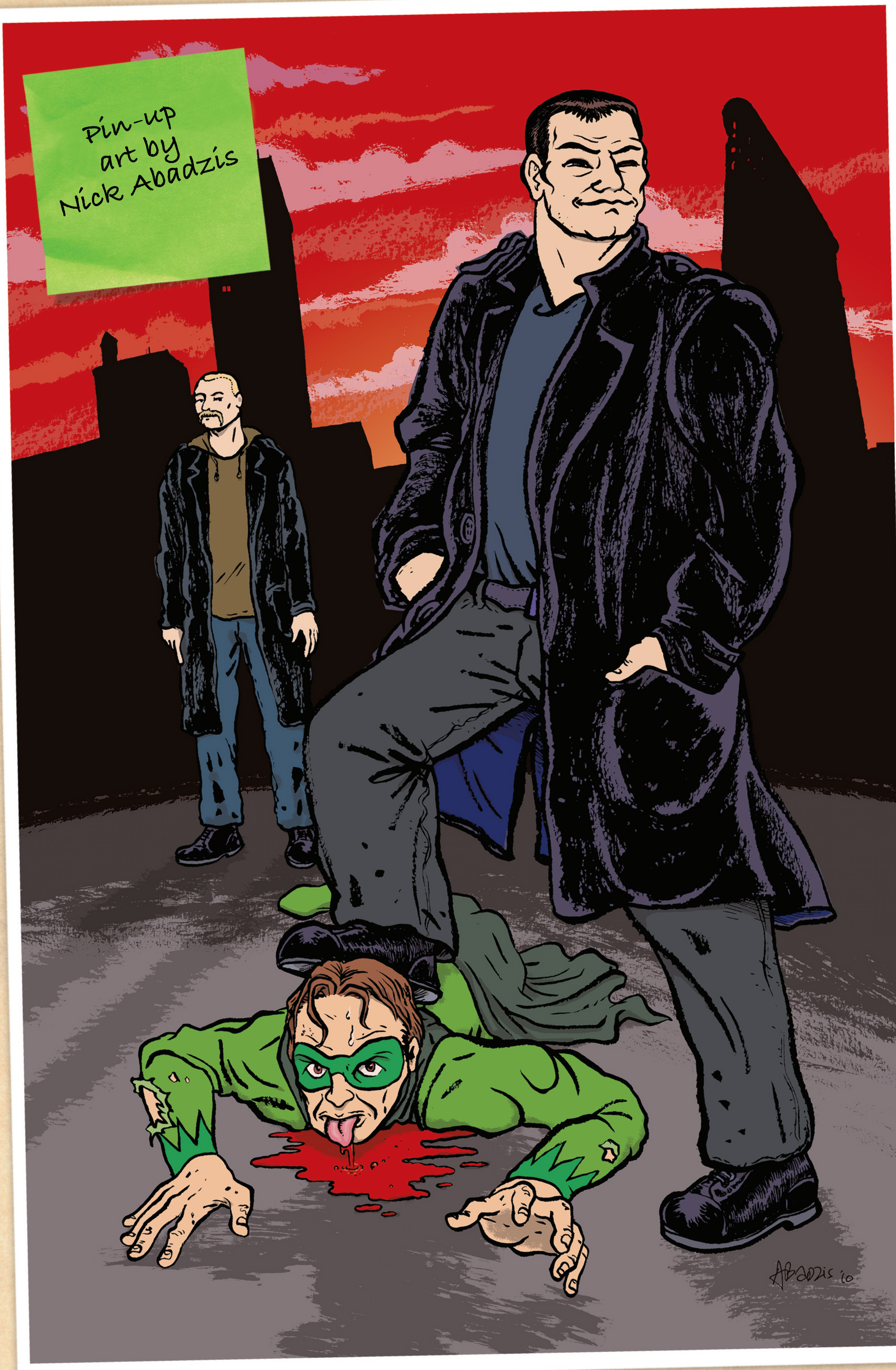
Rob Steen



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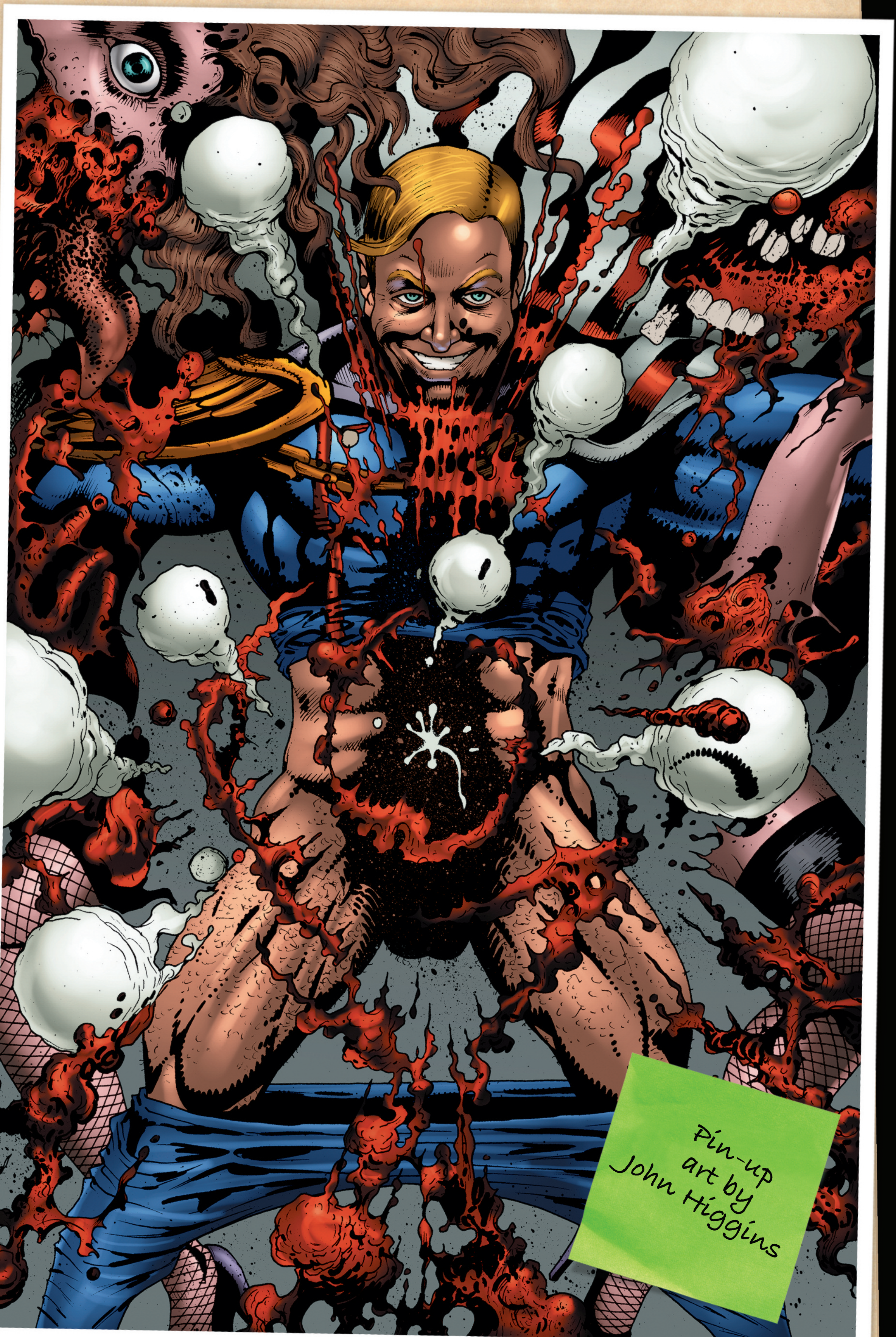
art by
Nick Abadzis



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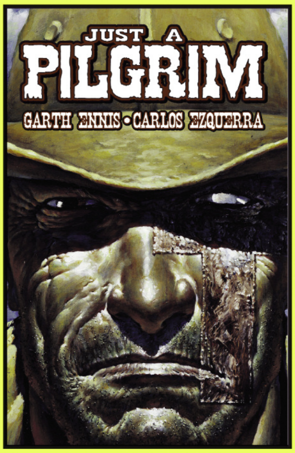
JUST A
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